CECILIA

OR

Memoirs of an Heiress

BY

FRANCES BURNEY

(In Three Volumes.)

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AN EVENT.

SCARCE less unhappy in her decision than in her uncertainty, and every way dissatisfied with her situation, her views and herself, Cecilia was still so distressed and uncomfortable, when Delvile called the next morning, that he could not discover what her determination had been, and fearfully enquired his doom with hardly any hope of finding favour.

But Cecilia was above affectation, and a stranger to art. "I would not, Sir," she said, "keep you an instant in suspense, when I am no longer in suspense myself. I may have appeared trifling, but I have been nothing less, and you would readily exculpate me of caprice, if half the distress of my irresolution was known to you. Even now, when I hesitate no more, my mind is so ill at ease, that I could neither wonder nor be displeased should you hesitate in your turn."

"You hesitate no more?" cried he, almost breathless at the sound of those words, "and is it possible ——Oh my Cecilia!—is it possible your resolution is in my favour?"

"Alas!" cried she, "how little is your reason to rejoice! a dejected and melancholy gift is all you can receive!"

"Ere I take it, then," cried he, in a voice that spoke joy, pain, and fear all at once in commotion, "tell me if your reluctance has its origin in *me*, that I may rather even yet relinquish you, than merely owe your hand to the selfishness of persecution?"

"Your pride," said she, half smiling, "has some right to be alarmed, though I meant not to alarm it. No! it is with myself only I am at variance, with my own weakness and want of judgment that I quarrel, ——in *you* I have all the reliance that the highest opinion of your honour and integrity can give me."

This was enough for the warm heart of Delvile, not only to restore peace, but to awaken rapture. He was almost as wild with delight, as he had before been with apprehension, and poured forth his acknowledgments with so much fervour of gratitude, that Cecilia imperceptibly grew reconciled to herself, and before she missed her dejection, participated in his contentment.

She quitted him as soon as she had power, to acquaint Mrs Charlton with what had passed, and assist in preparing her to accompany them to the altar; while Delvile flew to his new acquaintance, Mr Singleton, the lawyer, to request him to supply the place of Mr Monckton in giving her away.

All was now hastened with the utmost expedition, and to avoid observation, they agreed to meet at the church; their desire of secresy, however potent, never urging them to wish the ceremony should be performed in a place less awful.

When the chairs, however, came, which were to carry the two ladies thither, Cecilia trembled and hung back. The greatness of her undertaking, the hazard of all her future happiness, the disgraceful secresy of her

conduct, the expected reproaches of Mrs Delvile, and the boldness and indelicacy of the step she was about to take, all so forcibly struck, and so painfully wounded her, that the moment she was summoned to set out, she again lost her resolution, and regretting the hour that ever Delvile was known to her, she sunk into a chair, and gave up her whole soul to anguish and sorrow.

The good Mrs Charlton tried in vain to console her; a sudden horror against herself had now seized her spirits, which, exhausted by long struggles, could rally no more.

In this situation she was at length surprised by Delvile, whose uneasy astonishment that she had failed in her appointment, was only to be equalled by that with which he was struck at the sight of her tears. He demanded the cause with the utmost tenderness and apprehension; Cecilia for some time could not speak, and then, with a deep sigh, "Ah!" she cried, "Mr Delvile! how weak are we all when unsupported by our own esteem! how feeble, how inconsistent, how changeable, when our courage has any foundation but duty!"

Delvile, much relieved by finding her sadness sprung not from any new affliction, gently reproached her breach of promise, and earnestly entreated her to repair it. "The clergyman," cried he, "is waiting; I have left him with Mr Singleton in the vestry; no new objections have started, and no new obstacles have intervened; why, then, torment ourselves with discussing again the old ones, which we have already considered till every possible argument upon them is exhausted? Tranquillize, I conjure you, your agitated spirits, and if the truest tenderness, the most animated esteem, and the gratefullest admiration, can soften your future cares, and ensure your future peace, every anni-

versary of this day will recompense my Cecilia for every pang she now suffers!"

Cecilia, half soothed and half ashamed, finding she had in fact nothing new to say or to object, compelled herself to rise, and, penetrated by his solicitations, endeavoured to compose her mind, and promised to follow him.

He would not trust her, however, from his sight, but seizing the very instant of her renewed consent, he dismissed the chairs, and ordering a hackney-coach, preferred any risk to that of her again wavering, and insisted upon accompanying her in it himself.

Cecilia had now scarce time to breathe, before she found herself at the porch of —— church. Delvile hurried her out of the carriage, and then offered his arm to Mrs Charlton. Not a word was spoken by any of the party till they went into the vestry, where Delvile ordered Cecilia a glass of water, and having hastily made his compliments to the clergyman, gave her hand to Mr Singleton, who led her to the altar.

The ceremony was now begun; and Cecilia, finding herself past all power of retracting, soon called her thoughts from wishing it, and turned her whole attention to the awful service; to which though she listened with reverence, her full satisfaction in the object of her vows, made her listen without terror. But when the priest came to that solemn adjuration, *If any man can shew any just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together*, a conscious tear stole into her eye, and a sigh escaped from Delvile that went to her heart: but, when the priest concluded the exhortation with *let him now speak, or else hereafter for-ever hold his peace*, a female voice at some distance, called out in shrill accents, "I do!"

The ceremony was instantly stopt. The astonished priest immediately shut up the book to regard the

intended bride and bridegroom; Delvile started with amazement to see whence the sound proceeded; and Cecilia, aghast, and struck with horror, faintly shriekt, and caught hold of Mrs Charlton.

The consternation was general, and general was the silence, though all of one accord turned round towards the place whence the voice issued: a female form at the same moment was seen rushing from a pew, who glided out of the church with the quickness of lightning.

Not a word was yet uttered, every one seeming rooted to the spot on which he stood, and regarding in mute wonder the place this form had crossed.

Delvile at length exclaimed, "*What can this mean?*"

"*Did you not know the woman, Sir?*" said the clergyman.

"*No, Sir, I did not even see her.*"

"Nor you, madam?" said he, addressing Cecilia.

"*No, Sir,*" she answered, in a voice that scarce articulated the two syllables, and changing colour so frequently, that Delvile, apprehensive she would faint, flew to her, calling out, "Let *me* support you!"

She turned from him hastily, and still, holding by Mrs Charlton, moved away from the altar.

"Whither," cried Delvile, fearfully following her, "whither are you going?"

She made not any answer; but still, though tottering as much from emotion as Mrs Charlton from infirmity, she walked on.

"Why did you stop the ceremony, Sir?" cried Delvile, impatiently speaking to the clergyman.

"No ceremony, Sir," he returned, "could proceed with such an interruption."

"*It has been wholly accidental,*" cried he, "*for we* neither of us know the woman, who could not have any

right or authority for the prohibition." Then yet more anxiously pursuing Cecilia, "why," he continued, "do you thus move off?—Why leave the ceremony unfinished?——Mrs Charlton, what is it you are about? —Cecilia, I beseech you return, and let the service go on!"

Cecilia, making a motion with her hand to forbid his following her, still silently proceeded, though drawing along with equal difficulty Mrs Charlton and herself.

"This is insupportable!" cried Delvile, with vehemence, "turn, I conjure you!—my Cecilia!—my wife!—why is it you thus abandon me?——Turn, I implore you, and receive my eternal vows!—Mrs Charlton, bring her back,—Cecilia, you *must* not go! —"

He now attempted to take her hand, but shrinking from his touch, in an emphatic but low voice, she said, "Yes, Sir, I must!—an interdiction such as this!—for the world could I not brave it!"

She then made an effort to somewhat quicken her pace.

"Where," cried Delvile, half frantic, "where is this infamous woman? This wretch who has thus wantonly destroyed me!"

And he rushed out of the church in pursuit of her.

The clergyman and Mr Singleton, who had hitherto been wondering spectators, came now to offer their assistance to Cecilia. She declined any help for herself, but gladly accepted their services for Mrs Charlton, who, thunderstruck by all that had past, seemed almost robbed of her faculties. Mr Singleton proposed calling a hackney coach, she consented, and they stopt for it at the church porch.

The clergyman now began to enquire of the pew-opener, what she knew of the woman, who she was, and how she had got into the church? She knew of her,

she answered, nothing, but that she had come in to early prayers, and she supposed she had hid herself in a pew when they were over, as she had thought the church entirely empty.

An hackney coach now drew up, and while the gentlemen were assisting Mrs Charlton into it, Delvile returned.

"I have pursued and enquired," cried he, "in vain, I can neither discover nor hear of her.—But what is all this? Whither are you going?—What does this coach do here?——Mrs Charlton, why do you get into it?—Cecilia, what are you doing?"

Cecilia turned away from him in silence. The shock she had received, took from her all power of speech, while amazement and terror deprived her even of relief from tears. She believed Delvile to blame, though she knew not in what, but the obscurity of her fears served only to render them more dreadful.

She was now getting into the coach herself, but Delvile, who could neither brook her displeasure, nor endure her departure, forcibly caught her hand, and called out, "You are *mine*, you are my *wife!*—I will part with you no more, and go whithersoever you will, I will follow and claim you!"

"Stop me not!" cried she, impatiently though faintly, "I am sick, I am ill already,——if you detain me any longer, I shall be unable to support myself!"

"Oh then rest on *me!*" cried he, still holding her; "rest but upon me till the ceremony is over!——you will drive me to despair and to madness if you leave me in this barbarous manner!"

A crowd now began to gather, and the words bride and bridegroom reached the ears of Cecilia; who half dead with shame, with fear, and with distress, hastily said "You are determined to make me miserable!" and snatching away her hand, which Delvile at those words

could no longer hold, she threw herself into the carriage.

Delvile, however, jumped in after her, and with an air of authority ordered the coachman to Pall-Mall, and then drew up the glasses, with a look of fierceness at the mob.

Cecilia had neither spirits nor power to resist him; yet, offended by his violence, and shocked to be thus publickly pursued by him, her looks spoke a resentment far more mortifying than any verbal reproach.

"Inhuman Cecilia!" cried he, passionately, "to desert me at the very altar!—to cast me off at the instant the most sacred rites were uniting us!——and then thus to look at me!—to treat me with this disdain at a time of such distraction!—to scorn me thus injuriously at the moment you unjustly abandon me!"

"To how dreadful a scene," said Cecilia, recovering from her consternation, "have you exposed me! to what shame, what indignity, what irreparable disgrace!"

"Oh heaven!" cried he with horror, "if any crime, any offence of mine has occasioned this fatal blow, the whole world holds not a wretch so culpable as myself, nor one who will sooner allow the justice of your rigour! my veneration for you has ever equalled my affection, and could I think it was through *me* you have suffered any indignity, I should soon abhor myself as you seem to abhor me. But what is it I have done? How have I thus incensed you? By what action, by what guilt, have I incurred this displeasure?"

"Whence," cried she, "came that voice which still vibrates in my ear? The prohibition could not be on *my* account, since none to whom I am known have either right or interest in even wishing it."

"What an inference is this! over *me*, then, do you conclude this woman had any power?"

Here they stopt at the lodgings. Delvile handed both the ladies out. Cecilia, eager to avoid his importunities, and dreadfully disturbed, hastily past him, and ran up stairs; but Mrs Charlton refused not his arm, on which she lent till they reached the drawing-room.

Cecilia then rang the bell for her servant, and gave orders that a post-chaise might be sent for immediately.

Delvile now felt offended in his turn; but suppressing his vehemence, he gravely and quietly said "Determined as you are to leave me, indifferent to my peace, and incredulous of my word, deign, at least, before we part, to be more explicit in your accusation, and tell me if indeed it is possible you can suspect that the wretch who broke off the ceremony, had ever from me received provocation for such an action?"

"I know not what to suspect," said Cecilia, "where every thing is thus involved in obscurity; but I must own I should have some difficulty to think those words the effect of chance, or to credit that their speaker was concealed without design."

"You are right, then, madam," cried he, resentfully, "to discard me! to treat me with contempt, to banish me without repugnance, since I see you believe me capable of duplicity, and imagine I am better informed in this affair than I appear to be. You have said I shall make you miserable,—no, madam, no! your happiness and misery depend not upon one you hold so worthless!"

"On whatever they depend," said Cecilia, "I am too little at ease for discussion. I would no more be daring than superstitious, but none of our proceedings have prospered, and since their privacy has always been contrary both to my judgment and my principles, I know not how to repine at a failure I cannot think unmerited. Mrs Charlton, our chaise is coming; you will be ready, I hope, to set off in it directly?"

Delvile, too angry to trust himself to speak, now walked about the room, and endeavoured to calm himself; but so little was his success, that though silent till the chaise was announced, when he heard that dreaded sound, and saw Cecilia steady in her purpose of departing, he was so much shocked and afflicted, that, clasping his hands in a transport of passion and grief, he exclaimed "This, then, Cecilia, is your faith! this is the felicity you bid me hope! this is the recompense of my sufferings, and the performance of your engagement!"

Cecilia, struck by these reproaches, turned back; but while she hesitated how to answer them, he went on; "You are insensible to my misery, and impenetrable to my entreaties; a secret enemy has had power to make me odious in your sight, though for her enmity I can assign no cause, though even her existence was this morning unknown to me! Ever ready to abandon, and most willing to condemn me, you have more confidence in a vague conjecture, than in all you have observed of the whole tenour of my character. Without knowing why, you are disposed to believe me criminal, without deigning to say wherefore, you are eager to banish me your presence. Yet scarce could a consciousness of guilt itself, wound me so forcibly, so keenly, as your suspecting I am guilty!"

"Again, then," cried Cecilia, "shall I subject myself to a scene of such disgrace and horror? No, never!——The punishment of my error shall at least secure its reformation. Yet if I merit your reproaches, I deserve not your regard; cease, therefore, to profess any for me, or make them no more."

"Shew but to them," cried he, "the smallest sensibility, shew but for me the most distant concern, and I will try to bear my disappointment without murmuring, and submit to your decrees as to those from

which there is no appeal: but to wound without deigning even to look at what you destroy,—to shoot at random those arrows that are pointed with poison,—to see them fasten on the heart, and corrode its vital functions, yet look on without compunction, or turn away with cold disdain,—Oh where is the candour I thought lodged in Cecilia! where the justice, the equity, I believed a part of herself!"

"After all that has past," said Cecilia, sensibly touched by his distress, "I expected not these complaints, nor that, from me, any assurances would be wanted; yet, if it will quiet your mind, if it will better reconcile you to our separation——"

"Oh fatal prelude!" interrupted he, "what on earth can quiet my mind that leads to our separation? —Give to me no condescension with any such view,—preserve your indifference, persevere in your coldness, triumph still in your power of inspiring those feelings you can never return,—all, every thing is more supportable than to talk of our separation!"

"Yet how," cried she, "parted, torn asunder as we have been, how is it now to be avoided?"

"Trust in my honour! Shew me but the confidence which I will venture to say I deserve, and then will that union no longer be impeded, which in future, I am certain, will never be repented!"

"Good heaven, what a request! faith so implicit would be frenzy."

"You doubt, then, my integrity? You suspect——"

"Indeed I do not; yet in a case of such importance, what ought to guide me but my own reason, my own conscience, my own sense of right? Pain me not, therefore, with reproaches, distress me no more with entreaties, when I solemnly declare that no earthly consideration shall ever again make me promise you my hand, while the terror of Mrs Delvile's displeasure has possession of my heart. And now adieu."

"You give me, then, up?"

"Be patient, I beseech you; and attempt not to follow me; 'tis a step I cannot permit."

"Not follow you? And who has power to prevent me?"

"*I* have, Sir, if to incur my endless resentment is of any consequence to you."

She then, with an air of determined steadiness, moved on; Mrs Charlton, assisted by the servants, being already upon the stairs.

"O tyranny!" cried he, "what submission is it you exact!—May I not even enquire into the dreadful mystery of this morning?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And may I not acquaint you with it, should it be discovered?"

"I shall not be sorry to hear it. Adieu."

She was now half way down the stairs; when, losing all forbearance, he hastily flew after her, and endeavouring to stop her, called out, "If you do not hate and detest me,—if I am not loathsome and abhorrent to you, O quit me not thus insensibly!—Cecilia! my beloved Cecilia!—speak to me, at least, one word of less severity! Look at me once more, and tell me we part not for-ever!"

Cecilia then turned round, and while a starting tear shewed her sympathetic distress, said, "Why will you thus oppress me with entreaties I ought not to gratify?—Have I not accompanied you to the altar,—and can you doubt what I have thought of you?"

"*Have* thought?—Oh Cecilia!—is it then all over?"

"Pray suffer me to go quietly, and fear not I shall go too happily! Suppress your own feelings, rather than seek to awaken mine. Alas! there is little occasion!——Oh Mr Delvile! were our connection

opposed by no duty, and repugnant to no friends, were it attended by no impropriety, and carried on with no necessity of disguise,——you would not thus charge me with indifference, you would not suspect me of insensibility,—Oh no! the choice of my heart would then be its glory, and *all I now blush to feel, I should* openly and with pride acknowledge!"

She then hurried to the chaise, Delvile pursuing her with thanks and blessings, and gratefully assuring her, as he handed her into it, that he would obey all her injunctions, and not even attempt to see her, till he could bring her some intelligence concerning the morning's transaction.

The chaise then drove off.

Chapter iij.

A CONSTERNATION.

THE journey was melancholy and tedious: Mrs Charlton, extremely fatigued by the unusual hurry and exercise both of mind and body which she had lately gone through, was obliged to travel very slowly, and to lie upon the road. Cecilia, however, *was in no haste to proceed: she was going to no one* she wished to see, she was wholly without expectation of meeting with any thing that could give her pleasure. The unfortunate expedition in which she had been engaged, left her now nothing but regret, and only promised her in future sorrow and mortification.

Mrs Charlton, after her return home, still continued ill, and Cecilia, who constantly attended her, had the additional affliction of imputing her indisposition to herself. Every thing she thought conspired to punish the error she had committed; her proceedings were dis-

covered, though her motives were unknown; the Delvile family could not fail to hear of her enterprize, and while they attributed it to her temerity, they would exult in its failure: but chiefly hung upon her mind the unaccountable prohibition of her marriage. Whence that could proceed she was wholly without ability to divine, yet her surmizes were not more fruitless than various. At one moment she imagined it some frolic of Morrice, at another some perfidy of Monckton, and at another an idle and unmeaning trick of some stranger to them all. But none of these suppositions carried with them any air of probability; Morrice, even if he had watched their motions and pursued them to the church, which his inquisitive impertinence made by no means impossible, could yet hardly have either time or opportunity to engage any woman in so extraordinary an undertaking; Mr Monckton, however averse to the connection, she considered as a man of too much honour to break it off in a manner so alarming and disgraceful; and mischief so wanton in any stranger, seemed to require a share of unfeeling effrontery, which could fall to the lot of so few as to make this suggestion unnatural and incredible.

Sometimes she imagined that Delvile might formerly have been affianced to some woman, who having accidentally discovered his intentions, took this desperate method of rendering them abortive: but this was a short-lived thought, and speedily gave way to her esteem for his general character, and her confidence in the firmness of his probity.

All, therefore, was dark and mysterious; conjecture was baffled, and meditation was useless. Her opinions were unfixed, and her heart was miserable; she could only be steady in believing Delvile as unhappy as herself, and only find consolation in believing him, also, as blameless.

Three days passed thus, without incident or intelligence; her time wholly occupied in attending Mrs Charlton; her thoughts all engrossed upon her own situation: but upon the fourth day she was informed that a lady was in the parlour, who desired to speak with her. She presently went down stairs,—and, upon entering the room, perceived Mrs Delvile!

Seized with astonishment and fear, she stopt short, and, looking aghast, held by the door, robbed of all power to receive so unexpected and unwelcome a visitor, by an internal sensation of guilt, mingled with a dread of discovery and reproach.

Mrs Delvile, addressing her with the coldest politeness, said, "I fear I have surprised you; I am sorry I had not time to acquaint you of my intention to wait upon you."

Cecilia then, moving from the door, faintly answered, "I cannot, madam, but be honoured by your notice, whenever you are pleased to confer it."

They then sat down; Mrs Delvile preserving an air the most formal and distant, and Cecilia half sinking with apprehensive dismay.

After a short and ill-boding silence, "I mean not," said Mrs Delvile, "to embarrass or distress you; I will not, therefore, keep you in suspense of the purport of my visit. I come not to make enquiries, I come not to put your sincerity to any trial, nor to torture your delicacy; I dispense with all explanation, for I have not one doubt to solve: I *know* what has passed, I *know* that my son loves you."

Not all her secret alarm, nor all the perturbation of her fears, had taught Cecilia to expect so direct an attack, nor enabled her to bear the shock of it with any composure: she could not speak, she could not look at Mrs Delvile; she arose, and walked to the window, without knowing what she was doing.

Here, however, her distress was not likely to diminish; for the first sight she saw was Fidel, who barked, and jumped up at the window to lick her hands.

"Good God! Fidel here!" exclaimed Mrs Delvile, amazed.

Cecilia, totally overpowered, covered her glowing face with both her hands, and sunk into a chair.

Mrs Delvile for a few minutes was silent; and then, following her, said, "Imagine not I am making any discovery, nor suspect me of any design to develop your sentiments. That Mortimer could love in vain I never believed; that Miss Beverley, possessing so much merit, could be blind to it in another, I never thought possible. I mean not, therefore, to solicit any account or explanation, but merely to beg your patience while I talk to you myself, and your permission to speak to you with openness and truth."

Cecilia, though relieved by this calmness from all apprehension of reproach, found in her manner a coldness that convinced her of the loss of her affection, and in the introduction to her business a solemnity that assured her what she should decree would be unalterable. She uncovered her face to shew her respectful attention, but she could not raise it up, and could not utter a word.

Mrs Delvile then seated herself next her, and gravely continued her discourse.

"Miss Beverley, however little acquainted with the state of our family affairs, can scarcely have been uninformed that a fortune such as hers seems almost all that family can desire; nor can she have failed to observe, that her merit and accomplishments have no where been more felt and admired: the choice therefore of Mortimer she could not doubt would have our sanction, and when she honoured his proposals with her favour, she might naturally conclude she gave happiness and pleasure to all his friends."

Cecilia, superior to accepting a palliation of which she felt herself undeserving, now lifted up her head, and forcing herself to speak, said "No, madam, I will not deceive you, for I have never been deceived myself: I presumed not to expect your approbation,—though in missing it I have for ever lost my own!"

"Has Mortimer, then," cried she with eagerness, "been strictly honourable? has he neither beguiled nor betrayed you?"

"No, madam," said she, blushing, "I have nothing to reproach him with."

"Then he is indeed my son!" cried Mrs Delvile, with emotion; "had he been treacherous to you, while disobedient to us, I had indisputably renounced him."

Cecilia, who now seemed the only culprit, felt herself in a state of humiliation not to be borne; she collected, therefore, all her courage, and said, "I have cleared Mr Delvile; permit me, madam, now, to say something for myself."

"Certainly; you cannot oblige me more than by speaking without disguise."

"It is not in the hope of regaining your good opinion,—that, I see, is lost!—but merely—"

"No, not lost," said Mrs Delvile, "but if once it was yet higher, the fault was my own, in indulging an expectation of perfection to which human nature is perhaps unequal."

Ah, then, thought Cecilia, all is over! the contempt I so much feared is incurred, and though it may be softened, it can never be removed!

"Speak, then, and with sincerity," she continued, "all you wish me to hear, and then grant me your attention in return to the purpose of my present journey."

"I have little, madam," answered the depressed Cecilia, "to say; you tell me you already know all

that has past; I will not, therefore, pretend to take any merit from revealing it: I will only add, that my consent to this transaction has made me miserable almost from the moment I gave it; that I meant and wished to retract as soon as reflection pointed out to me my error, and that circumstances the most perverse, not blindness to propriety, nor stubbornness in wrong, led me to make, at last, that fatal attempt, of which the recollection, to my last hour, must fill me with regret and shame."

"I wonder not," said Mrs Delvile, "that in a situation where delicacy was so much less requisite than courage, Miss Beverley should feel herself distressed and unhappy. A mind such as hers could never err with impunity; and it is solely from a certainty of her innate sense of right, that I venture to wait upon her now, and that I have any hope to influence *her* upon whose influence alone our whole family must in future depend. Shall I now proceed, or is there any thing you wish to say first?"

"No, madam, nothing."

"Hear me, then, I beg of you, with no pre-determination to disregard me, but with an equitable resolution to attend to reason, and a candour that leaves an opening to conviction. Not easy, indeed, is such a task, to a mind pre-occupied with an intention to be guided by the dictates of inclination,——"

"You wrong me, indeed, madam!" interrupted Cecilia, greatly hurt, "my mind harbours no such intention, it has no desire but to be guided by duty, it is wretched with a consciousness of having failed in it! I pine, I sicken to recover my own good opinion; I should then no longer feel unworthy of yours; and whether or not I might be able to regain it, I should at least lose this cruel depression that now sinks me in your presence!"

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"To regain it," said Mrs Delvile, "were to exercise *but half your power, which at this moment enables you,* if such is your wish, to make me think of you more highly than one human being ever thought of another. Do you condescend to hold this worth your while?"

Cecilia started at the question; her heart beat quick with struggling passions; she saw the sacrifice which was to be required, and her pride, her affronted pride, arose high to anticipate the rejection; but the design was combated by her affections, which opposed the indignant rashness, and told her that one hasty speech might separate her from Delvile for ever. When this painful conflict was over, of which Mrs Delvile patiently waited the issue, she answered, with much hesitation, "To regain your good opinion, madam, greatly, truly *as I value it,—is what I now scarcely dare hope.*"

"Say not so," cried she, "since, if you hope, you cannot miss it. I purpose to point out to you the means to recover it, and to tell you how greatly I shall think myself your debtor if you refuse not to employ them."

She stopt; but Cecilia hung back; fearful of her own strength, she dared venture at no professions; yet, how either to support, or dispute her compliance, she dreaded to think.

"I come to you, then," Mrs Delvile solemnly resumed, "in the name of Mr Delvile, and in the name of our whole family; a family as ancient as it is honourable, as honourable as it is ancient. Consider me as its representative, and hear in me its common voice, common opinion, and common address.

"My son, the supporter of our house, the sole guardian of its name, and the heir of our united fortunes, has selected you, we know, for the lady of his choice, and so fondly has fixed upon you his affections, that he is ready to relinquish us all in preference to

subduing them. To yourself alone, then, can we apply, and I come to you——"

"O hold, madam, hold!" interrupted Cecilia, whose courage now revived from resentment, "I know what you would say; you come to tell me of your disdain; you come to reproach my presumption, and to kill me with your contempt! There is little occasion for such a step; I am depressed, I am self-condemned already: spare me, therefore, this insupportable humiliation, wound me not with your scorn, oppress me not with your superiority! I aim at no competition, I attempt no vindication, I acknowledge my own littleness as readily as you can despise it, and nothing but indignity could urge me to defend it!"

"*Believe me,*" *said Mrs Delvile,* "*I meant not to* hurt or offend you, and I am sorry if I have appeared to you either arrogant or assuming. The peculiar and perilous situation of my family has perhaps betrayed me into offensive expressions, and made me guilty myself of an ostentation which in others has often disgusted me. Ill, indeed, can we any of us bear the test of experiment, when tried upon those subjects which call forth our particular propensities. We may strive to be disinterested, we may struggle to be impartial, but self will still predominate, still shew us the imperfection of our natures, and the narrowness of our souls. Yet acquit me, I beg, of any intentional insolence, and imagine not that in speaking highly of my own family, I mean to depreciate yours: on the contrary, I know it to be respectable, I know, too, that were it the lowest in the kingdom, the first might envy it that it gave birth to such a daughter."

Cecilia, somewhat soothed by this speech, begged her pardon for having interrupted her, and she proceeded.

"To your family, then, I assure you, whatever may be the pride of our own, *you* being its offspring, we

would not object. With your merit we are all well acquainted, your character has our highest esteem, and your fortune exceeds even our most sanguine desires. Strange at once and afflicting! that not all these requisites for the satisfaction of prudence, nor all these allurements for the gratification of happiness, can suffice to fulfil or to silence the claims of either! There are yet other demands to which we must attend, demands which ancestry and blood call upon us aloud to ratify! Such claimants are not to be neglected with impunity; they assert their rights with the authority of prescription, they forbid us alike either to bend to inclination, or stoop to interest, and from generation to generation their injuries will call out for redress, should their noble and long unsullied name be voluntarily consigned to oblivion!"

Cecilia, extremely struck by these words, scarce wondered, since so strong and so established were her opinions, that the obstacle to her marriage, though but one, should be considered as insuperable.

"Not, therefore, to *your* name are we averse," she continued, "but simply to our own more partial. To sink that, indeed, in *any* other, were base and unworthy: —what, then, must be the shock of my disappointment, should Mortimer Delvile, the darling of my hopes, the last survivor of his house, in whose birth I rejoiced as the promise of its support, in whose accomplishments I gloried, as the revival of its lustre,—should *he*, should *my* son be the first to abandon it! to give up the name he seemed born to make live, and to cause in effect its utter annihilation!—Oh how should I know my son when an alien to his family! how bear to think I had cherished in my bosom the betrayer of its dearest interests, the destroyer of its very existence!"

Cecilia, scarce more afflicted than offended, now hastily answered, "Not for me, madam, shall he

commit this crime, not on *my* account shall he be reprobated by his family! Think of him, therefore, no more, with any reference to me, for I would not be the cause of unworthiness or guilt in him to be mistress of the universe!"

"Nobly said!" cried Mrs Delvile, her eyes sparkling with joy, and her cheeks glowing with pleasure, "now again do I know Miss Beverley! now again see the refined, the excellent young woman, whose virtues taught me to expect the renunciation even of her own happiness, when found to be incompatible with her duty!"

Cecilia now trembled and turned pale; she scarce knew herself what she had said, but, she found by Mrs Delvile's construction of her words, they had been regarded as her final relinquishing of her son. She ardently wished to quit the room before she was called upon to confirm the sentence, but she had not courage to make the effort, nor to rise, speak, or move.

"I grieve, indeed," continued Mrs Delvile, whose coldness and austerity were changed into mildness and compassion, "at the necessity I have been under to draw from you a concurrence so painful: but no other resource was in my power. My influence with Mortimer, whatever it may be, I have not any right to try, without obtaining your previous consent, since I regard him myself as bound to you in honour, and only to be released by your own virtuous desire. I will leave you, however, for my presence, I see, is oppressive to you. Farewell; and when you *can* forgive me, I think you *will*."

"I have nothing, madam," said Cecilia, coldly, "to forgive; you have only asserted your own dignity, and I have nobody to blame but myself, for having given you occasion."

"Alas," cried Mrs Delvile, "if worth and nobleness

of soul on your part, if esteem and tenderest affection on mine, were *all which that dignity which offends you* requires, how should I crave the blessing of such a daughter! how rejoice in joining my son to excellence so like his own, and ensuring his happiness while I stimulated his virtue!"

"Do not talk to me of affection, madam," said Cecilia, turning away from her; "whatever you had for me is past,—even your esteem is gone,—you may pity me, indeed, but your pity is mixed with contempt, and I am not so abject as to find comfort from exciting it."

"O little," cried Mrs Delvile, looking at her with the utmost tenderness, "little do you see the state of my heart, for never have you appeared to me so worthy as at this moment! In tearing you from my son, I partake all the wretchedness I give, but your own sense of duty must something plead for the strictness with which I act up to mine."

She then moved towards the door.

"Is your carriage, madam," said Cecilia, struggling to disguise her inward anguish under an appearance of sullenness, "*in waiting?*"

Mrs Delvile then came back, and holding out her hand, while her eyes glistened with tears, said, "To part from you thus frigidly, while my heart so warmly admires you, is almost more than I can endure. Oh gentlest Cecilia! condemn not a mother who is impelled to this severity, who performing what she holds to be her duty, thinks the office her bitterest misfortune, *who forsees in the rage of her husband, and the resistance* of her son, all the misery of domestic contention, and who can only secure the honour of her family by destroying its peace!—You will not, then, give me your hand?—"

Cecilia, who had affected not to see that she waited

for it, now coldly put it out, distantly [courtseying], and seeking to preserve her steadiness by avoiding to speak. Mrs Delvile took it, and as she repeated her adieu, affectionately pressed it to her lips; Cecilia, starting, and breathing short, from encreasing yet smothered agitation, called out "Why, why this condescension? —pray,—I entreat you, madam!—"

"Heaven bless you, my love!" said Mrs Delvile, dropping a tear upon the hand she still held, "heaven bless you, and restore the tranquillity you so nobly deserve!"

"Ah madam!" cried Cecilia, vainly striving to repress any longer the tears which now forced their way down her cheeks, "why will you break my heart with this kindness! why will you still compel me to love,—when now I almost wish to hate you!"—

"No, hate me not," said Mrs Delvile, kissing from her cheeks the tears that watered them, "hate me not, sweetest Cecilia, though in wounding your gentle bosom, I am almost detestable to myself. Even the cruel scene which awaits me with my son will not more deeply afflict me. But adieu,—I must now prepare for *him!*"

She then left the room: but Cecilia, whose pride had no power to resist this tenderness, ran hastily after her, saying "Shall I not see you again, madam?"

"You shall yourself decide," answered she; "if my coming will not give you more pain than pleasure, I will wait upon you whenever you please."

Cecilia sighed and paused; she knew not what to desire, yet rather wished any thing to be done, than quietly to sit down to uninterrupted reflection.

"Shall I postpone quitting this place," continued Mrs Delvile, "till to-morrow morning, and will you admit me this afternoon, should I call upon you again?"

"I should be sorry," said she, still hesitating, "to detain you,"—

"You will rejoice me," cried Mrs Delvile, "by bearing me in your sight."

And she then went into her carriage.

Cecilia, unfitted to attend her old friend, and unequal to the task of explaining to her the cruel scene in which she had just been engaged, then hastened to her own apartment. Her hitherto stifled emotions broke forth in tears and repinings: her fate was finally determined, and its determination was not more unhappy than humiliating; she was openly rejected by the family whose alliance she was known to wish; she was compelled to refuse the man of her choice, though satisfied his affections were her own. A misery so peculiar she found hard to support, and almost bursting with conflicting passions, her heart alternately swelled from offended pride, and sunk from disappointed tenderness.

Chapter 16.

A PERTURBATION.

CECILIA was still in this tempestuous state, when a message was brought her that a gentleman was below stairs, who begged to have the honour of seeing her. She concluded he was Delvile, and the thought of meeting him merely to communicate what must so bitterly afflict him, redoubled her distress, and she went down in an agony of perturbation and sorrow.

He met her at the door, where, before he could speak, "Mr Delvile," she cried, in a hurrying manner, "why will you come? Why will you thus insist upon

seeing me, in defiance of every obstacle, and in contempt of my prohibition?"

"Good heavens," cried he, amazed, "whence this reproach? Did you not permit me to wait upon you with the result of my enquiries? Had I not your consent—but why do you look thus disturbed?—Your eyes are red,—you have been weeping.—Oh my Cecilia! have *I* any share in your sorrow?—Those tears, which never flow weakly, tell me, have they——has *one* of them been shed upon my account?"

"And what," cried she, "has been the result of your enquiries?—Speak quick, for I wish to know,—and in another instant I must be gone."

"How strange," cried the astonished Delvile, "is this language! how strange are these looks! What new has come to pass? Has any fresh calamity happened? Is there yet some evil which I do not expect?"

"Why will you not answer first?" cried she; "when *I* have spoken, you will perhaps be less willing."

"You terrify, you shock, you amaze me! What dreadful blow awaits me? For what horror are you preparing me?—That which I have just experienced, and which tore you from me even at the foot of the altar, still remains inexplicable, still continues to be involved in darkness and mystery; for the wretch who separated us I have never been able to discover."

"Have you procured, then, no intelligence?"

"No, none; though since we parted I have never rested a moment."

"Make, then, no further enquiry, for now all explanation would be useless. That we *were* parted, we know, though *why* we cannot tell: but that again we shall ever meet——"

She stopt; her streaming eyes cast upwards, and a deep sigh bursting from her heart.

"Oh what," cried Delvile, *endeavouring to take her* hand, which she hastily withdrew from him, "what does this mean? loveliest, dearest Cecilia, my betrothed, my affianced *wife! why flow those tears which agony* only can wring from you? Why refuse me that hand which so lately was the pledge of your faith? Am I not the same Delvile to whom so few days since you gave it? Why will you not open to him your heart? Why thus distrust his honour, and repulse his tenderness? Oh why, giving him such exquisite misery, refuse him the smallest consolation?"

"What consolation," cried the weeping Cecilia, "can I give? Alas! it is not, perhaps, *you* who *most want it!*——"

Here the door was opened by one of the Miss Charltons, who came into the room with a message *from her grandmother, requesting to see Cecilia.* Cecilia, ashamed of being thus surprised with Delvile, and in tears, waited not either to make any excuse to him, or any answer to Miss Charlton, but instantly hurried out of the room;—not, however, to her old friend, whom now less than ever she could meet, but to her own apartment, where a very short indulgence of grief was succeeded by the severest examination of her own conduct.

A retrospection of this sort rarely brings much *subject of exultation, when made with the rigid sincerity* of secret impartiality: so much stronger is our reason than our virtue, so much higher our sense of duty than *our performance!*

All she had done she now repented, all she had said she disapproved; her conduct, seldom equal to her *notions of right, was now infinitely below them,* and the reproaches of her judgment made her forget for a while the afflictions which had misled it.

The sorrow to which she had openly given way in

the presence of Delvile, though their total separation but the moment before had been finally decreed, she considered as a weak effusion of tenderness, injurious to delicacy, and censurable by propriety. "His power over my heart," cried she, "it were now, indeed, too late to conceal, but his power over my understanding it is time to cancel. I am not to be his,—my own voice has ratified the renunciation, and since I made it to his mother, it must never, without her consent, be invalidated. Honour, therefore, to her, and regard for myself, equally command me to fly him, till I cease to be thus affected by his sight."

When Delvile, therefore, sent up an entreaty that he might be again admitted into her presence, she returned for answer that she was not well, and could not see any body.

He then left the house, and, in a few minutes, she received the following note from him.

To Miss Beverley.

You drive me from you, Cecilia, tortured with suspense, and distracted with apprehension,—you drive me from you, certain of my misery, yet leaving me to bear it as I may! I would call you unfeeling, but that I saw you were unhappy; I would reproach you with tyranny, but that your eyes when you quitted me were swollen with weeping! I go, therefore, I obey the harsh mandate, since my absence is your desire, and I will shut myself up at Biddulph's till I receive your commands. Yet disdain not to reflect that every instant will seem endless, while Cecilia must appear to me unjust, or wound my very soul by the recollection of her in sorrow.

MORTIMER DELVILE.

The mixture of fondness and resentment with which

this letter was dictated, marked so strongly the sufferings and disordered state of the writer, that all the softness of Cecilia returned when she perused it, and left her not a wish but to lessen his inquietude, by assurances of *unalterable regard: yet she determined not to trust her*self in his sight, certain they could only meet to grieve over each other, and conscious that a participation of sorrow would but prove a reciprocation of tenderness. Calling, therefore, upon her duty to resist her inclination, *she resolved to commit the whole affair to the will of* Mrs. Delvile, to whom, though under no promise, she now considered herself responsible. Desirous, however, to shorten the period of Delvile's uncertainty, she would not wait till the time she had appointed to see his mother, but wrote the following note to hasten their meeting.

To the Hon. Mrs Delvile.

MADAM,—Your son is now at Bury; shall I acquaint him of your arrival? or will you announce it yourself? *Inform me of your desire, and I will endeavour to* fulfil it. As my own Agent I regard myself no longer; if, as yours, I can give pleasure, or be of service, I shall gladly receive your commands. I have the honour to be, Madam, your most obedient servant,

CECILIA BEVERLEY.

When she had sent off this letter, her heart was more at ease, because reconciled with her conscience: she had sacrificed the son, she had resigned herself to the mother; it now only remained to heal her wounded pride, by suffering the sacrifice with dignity, and to recover her tranquility in virtue, by making the resignation without repining.

Her reflections, too, growing clearer as the mist of passion was dispersed, she recollected with confusion her

cold and sullen behaviour to Mrs Delvile. That lady had but done what she had believed was her duty, and that duty was no more than she had been taught to expect from her. In the beginning of her visit, and while doubtful of its success, she had indeed, been austere, but the moment victory appeared in view, she became tender, affectionate and gentle. Her justice, therefore, condemned the resentment to which she had given way, and she fortified her mind for the interview which was to follow, by an earnest desire to make all reparation both to Mrs Delvile and herself for that which was past.

In this resolution she was not a little strengthened, by seriously considering with herself the great abatement to all her possible happiness, which must have been made by the humiliating circumstance of forcing herself into a family which held all connection with her as disgraceful. She desired not to be the wife even of Delvile upon such terms, for the more she esteemed and admired him, the more anxious she became for his honour, and the less could she endure being regarded herself as the occasion of its diminution.

Now, therefore, her plan of conduct settled, with calmer spirits, though a heavy heart, she attended upon Mrs Charlton; but fearing to lose the steadiness she had just acquired before it should be called upon, if she trusted herself to relate the decision which had been made, she besought her for the present to dispense with the account, and then forced herself into conversation upon less interesting subjects.

This prudence had its proper effect, and with tolerable tranquility she heard Mrs Delvile again announced, and waited upon her in the parlour with an air of composure.

Not so did Mrs Delvile receive her; she was all eagerness and emotion; she flew to her the moment

she appeared, and throwing her arms around her, warmly exclaimed "Oh charming girl! Saver of our family! preserver of our honour! How poor are words to express my admiration! how inadequate are thanks in return for such obligations as I owe you!"

"You owe me none, madam," said Cecilia, suppressing a sigh; "*on my side will be all the obligation*, if you can pardon the petulance of my behaviour this morning."

"Call not by so harsh a name," answered Mrs Delvile, "the keenness of a sensibility by which you have yourself alone been the sufferer. You have had a trial the most severe, and however able to sustain, it was impossible you should not feel it. That you should give up *any* man whose friends solicit not your alliance, your mind is too delicate to make wonderful; but your generosity in submitting, unasked, the arrangement of that resignation to those for whose interest it is made, and your high sense of honour in holding yourself accountable to *me*, though under no tie, and bound by no promise, mark a greatness of mind which calls for reverence rather than thanks, and which I never can praise half so much as I admire."

Cecilia, who received this applause but as a confirmation of her rejection, thanked her only by courtsying; and Mrs Delvile, having seated herself next her, continued her speech.

"My son, you have the goodness to tell me, is here, —have you seen him?"

"Yes, madam," answered she, blushing, "but hardly for a moment."

"And he knows not of my arrival?"

"No,——I believe he certainly does not."

"Sad then, is the trial which awaits him, and heavy for me the office I must perform! Do you expect to see him again?"

"No,—yes,—perhaps——indeed I hardly—"

She stammered, and Mrs Delvile, taking her hand, said "Tell me, Miss Beverley, *why* should you see him again?"

Cecilia was thunderstruck by this question, and, colouring yet more deeply, looked down, but could not answer.

"Consider," continued Mrs Delvile, "the *purpose* of any further meeting; your union is impossible, you have nobly consented to relinquish all thoughts of it: why then tear your own heart, and torture his, by an intercourse which seems nothing but an ill-judged invitation to fruitless and unavailing sorrow?"

Cecilia was still silent; the truth of the expostulation her reason acknowledged, but to assent to its consequence her whole heart refused.

"The ungenerous triumph of little female vanity," said Mrs Delvile, "is far, I am sure, from your mind, of which the enlargement and liberality will rather find consolation from lessening than from embittering his sufferings. Speak to me, then, and tell me honestly, judiciously, candidly tell me,——will it not be wiser and more right, to avoid rather than seek an object which can only give birth to regret? an interview which can excite no sensations but of misery and sadness?"

Cecilia then turned pale, she endeavoured to speak, but could not; she wished to comply,—yet to think she had seen him for the last time, to remember how abruptly she had parted from him, and to fear she had treated him unkindly;—these were obstacles which opposed her concurrence, though both judgment and propriety demanded it.

"Can you, then," said Mrs Delvile, after a pause, "can you wish to see Mortimer merely to behold his grief? Can you desire he should see you, only to sharpen his affliction at your loss?"

"O no!" cried Cécilia, to whom this reproof restored speech and resolution, "I am not so despicable, *I am not, I hope, so unworthy!*—*I will be ruled by* you wholly; I will commit to you every thing;—yet *once*, perhaps,—no more!"——

"Ah, my dear Miss Beverley! to meet confessedly for *once*,—what were that but planting a dagger in the heart of Mortimer? What were it but infusing poison into your own?"

"If you think so, madam," said she, "I had better ——I will certainly—" she sighed, stammered, and stopt.

"Hear me," cried Mrs Delvile, "and rather let me try to convince than persuade you. Were there any possibility, by argument, by reflection, or even by accident, to remove the obstacles to our connection, then would it be well to meet, for then might discussion turn to account, and an interchange of sentiments be productive of some happy expedients: but here—"

She hesitated, and Cecilia, shocked and ashamed, turned away her face, and cried "I know, madam, what you would say,—here all is over! and therefore——"

"Yet suffer me," interrupted she, "to be explicit, since we speak upon this matter now for the last time. Here, then, I say, where not ONE doubt remains, where ALL is finally, though not happily decided, what can an interview produce? Mischief of every sort, pain, horror, and repining! To Mortimer you may think it would be kind, and grant it to his prayers, as an alleviation of his misery; mistaken notion! nothing could so greatly augment it. All his passions would be raised, all his prudence would be extinguished, his soul would be torn with resentment and regret, and force, only, would part him from you, when previously he knew that parting was to be eternal. To yourself——"

"Talk not, madam, of *me*," cried the unhappy Cecilia, "what you say of your son is sufficient, and I will yield——"

"Yet hear me," proceeded she, "and believe me not so unjust as to consider him alone; you, also, would be an equal, though a less stormy sufferer. You fancy, at this moment, that once more to meet him would soothe your uneasiness, and that to take of him a farewell, would soften the pain of the separation: how false such reasoning! how dangerous such consolation! acquainted ere you meet that you were to meet him no more, your heart would be all softness and grief, and at the very moment when tenderness should be banished from your intercourse, it would bear down all opposition of judgment, spirit, and dignity: you would hang upon every word, because every word would seem the last, every look, every expression would be rivetted in your memory, and his image in this parting distress would be painted upon your mind, in colours that would eat into its peace, and perhaps never be erased."

"Enough, enough," said Cecilia, "I will not see him,——I will not even desire it!"

"Is this compliance or conviction? Is what I have said true, or only terrifying?"

"Both, both!! I believe, indeed, the conflict would have overpowered me,—I see you are right,—and I thank you, madam, for saving me from a scene I might so cruelly have rued."

"Oh Daughter of my mind!" cried Mrs Delvile, rising and embracing her, "noble, generous, yet gentle Cecilia! what tie, what connection, could make you *more dear to me? Who is there like you? Who* half so excellent? So open to reason, so ingenuous in error! so rational! so just! so feeling, yet so wise!"

"You are very good," said Cecilia, with a forced

serenity, "and I am thankful that your resentment for the past obstructs not your lenity for the present."

"Alas, my love, how shall I resent the past, when I ought myself to have foreseen this calamity! and I *should* have foreseen it, had I not been informed you were engaged, and upon your engagement built our security. Else had I been more alarmed, for my own admiration would have bid me look forward to my son's. You were just, indeed, the woman he had *least chance to resist, you were precisely the character* to seize his very soul. To a softness the most fatally alluring, you join a dignity which rescues from their own contempt even the most humble of your admirers. You seem born to have all the world wish your exaltation, and no part of it murmur at your superiority. Were any obstacle but this insuperable one in the way, should nobles, nay, should princes offer their daughters to my election, I would reject without murmuring the most magnificent proposals, and take in triumph to my heart my son's nobler choice!"

"*Oh madam,*" cried Cecilia, "*talk not to me thus!* ——speak not such flattering words!—ah, rather scorn and upbraid me, tell me you despise my character, my family and my connections,—load, load me with contempt, but do not thus torture me with approbation!"

"Pardon me, sweetest girl, if I have awakened those emotions you so wisely seek to subdue. May my son but *emulate your example, and my pride in his virtue* shall be the solace of my affliction for his misfortunes."

She then tenderly embraced her, and abruptly took her leave.

Cecilia had now acted her part, and acted it to her own satisfaction; but the curtain dropt when Mrs Delvile left the house, nature resumed her rights, and the sorrow of her heart was no longer disguised or re-

pressed. Some faint ray of hope had till now broke through the gloomiest cloud of her misery, and secretly flattered her that its dispersion was possible, though distant: but that ray was extinct, that hope was no more; she had solemnly promised to banish Delvile her sight, and his mother had absolutely declared that even the subject had been discussed for the last time.

Mrs Charlton, impatient of some explanation of the morning's transactions, soon sent again to beg Cecilia would come to her. Cecilia reluctantly obeyed, for she feared encreasing her indisposition by the intelligence she had to communicate; she struggled, therefore, to appear to her with tolerable calmness, and in briefly relating what had passed, forbore to mingle with the narrative her own feelings and unhappiness.

Mrs Charlton heard the account with the utmost concern; she accused Mrs Delvile of severity, and even of cruelty; she lamented the strange accident by which the marriage ceremony had been stopt, and regretted that it had not again been begun, as the only means to have rendered ineffectual the present fatal interposition.

But the grief of Cecilia, however violent, induced her not to join in this regret; she mourned only the obstacle which had occasioned the separation, and not the incident which had merely interrupted the ceremony: convinced, by the conversations in which she had just been engaged, of Mrs Delvile's inflexibility, she rather rejoiced than repined that she had put it to no nearer trial: sorrow was all she felt; for her mind was too liberal to harbour resentment against a conduct which she saw was dictated by a sense of right; and too ductile and too affectionate to remain unmoved by the personal kindness which had softened the rejection, and the many marks of esteem and regard which had shewn her it was lamented, though considered as indispensable.

How and by whom this affair had been betrayed to Mrs Delvile she knew not; but the discovery was nothing less than surprising, since, by various unfortunate accidents, it was known to so many, and since, in the horror and confusion of the mysterious prohibition to the marriage, neither Delvile nor herself had thought of even attempting to give any caution to the witnesses of that scene, not to make it known: an attempt, however, which must almost necessarily have been unavailing, as the incident was too extraordinary and too singular to have any chance of suppression.

During this conversation, one of the servants came to inform Cecilia, that a man was below to enquire if there was no answer to the note he had brought in the forenoon.

Cecilia, greatly distressed, knew not upon what to resolve; that the patience of Delvile should be exhausted, she did not, indeed, wonder, and to relieve his anxiety was now almost her only wish; she would therefore instantly have written to him, confessed her sympathy in his sufferings, and besought him to endure with fortitude an evil which was no longer to be withstood: but she was uncertain whether he was yet acquainted with the journey of his mother to Bury, and having agreed to commit to her the whole management of the affair, she feared it would be dishonourable to take any step in it without her concurrence. She returned, therefore, a message that she had yet no answer ready.

In a very few minutes Delvile called himself, and sent up an earnest request for permission to see her.

Here, at least, she had no perplexity; an interview she had given her positive word to refuse, and therefore, without a moment's hesitation, she bid the servant inform him she was particularly engaged, and sorry it was not in her power to see any company.

In the greatest perturbation he left the house, and immediately wrote to her the following lines.

To Miss Beverley.

I entreat you to see me! if only for an instant, I entreat, I implore you to see me! Mrs Charlton may be present,——all the world, if you wish it, may be present,——but deny me not admission, I supplicate, I conjure you!

I will call in an hour; in that time you may have finished your present engagement. I will otherwise wait longer, and call again. You will not, I think, turn me from your door, and, till I have seen you, I can only live in its vicinity.

M. D.

The man who brought this note, waited not for any answer.

Cecilia read it in an agony of mind inexpressible: she saw, by its style, how much Delvile was irritated, and her knowledge of his temper made her certain his irritation proceeded from believing himself ill-used. She ardently wished to appease and to quiet him, and regretted the necessity of appearing obdurate and unfeeling, even more, at that moment, than the separation itself. To a mind priding in its purity, and animated in its affections, few sensations can excite keener misery, than those by which an apprehension is raised of being thought worthless or ungrateful by the objects of our chosen regard. To be deprived of their society is less bitter, to be robbed of our own tranquillity by any other means, is less afflicting.

Yet to this it was necessary to submit, or incur the only penalty which, to such a mind, would be more severe, self-reproach: she had promised to be governed

by Mrs Delvile, she had nothing, therefore, to do but obey her.

Yet *to turn*, as he expressed himself, *from the door*, a man who, but for an incident the most incomprehensible, would now have been sole master of herself and her actions, seemed so unkind and so tyrannical, that she could not endure to be within hearing of his repulse: she begged, therefore, the use of Mrs Charlton's carriage, and determined to make a visit to Mrs Harrel till Delvile and his mother had wholly quitted Bury. She was not, indeed, quite satisfied in going to the house of Mr Arnott, but she had no time to weigh objections, and knew not any other place to which still greater might not be started.

She wrote a short letter to Mrs Delvile, acquainting her with her purpose, and its reason, and repeating her assurances that she would be guided by her implicitly; and then, embracing Mrs Charlton, whom she left to the care of her grand-daughters, she got into a chaise, accompanied only by her maid, and one man and horse, and ordered the postilion to drive to Mr Arnott's.

Chapter 6.

A COTTAGE.

THE evening was already far advanced, and before she arrived at the end of her little journey it was quite dark. When they came within a mile of Mr Arnott's house, the postilion, in turning too suddenly from the turnpike to the cross-road, overset the carriage. The accident, however, occasioned no other mischief than delaying their proceeding, and Cecilia and her maid were helped out of the chaise unhurt. The servants, assisted by a man who was

walking upon the road, began lifting it up; and Cecilia, too busy within to be attentive to what passed without, disregarded what went forward, till she heard her footman call for help. She then hastily advanced to enquire what was the matter, and found that the passenger who had lent his aid, had, by working in the dark, unfortunately slipped his foot under one of the wheels, and so much hurt it, that without great pain he could not put it to the ground.

Cecilia immediately desired that the sufferer might be carried to his own home in the chaise, while she and the maid walked on to Mr Arnott's, attended by her servant on horseback.

This little incident proved of singular service to her upon first entering the house; Mrs Harrel was at supper with her brother, and hearing the voice of Cecilia in the hall, hastened with the extremest surprise to enquire what had occasioned so late a visit; followed by Mr Arnott, whose amazement was accompanied with a thousand other sensations too powerful for speech. Cecilia, unprepared with any excuse, instantly related the adventure she had met with on the road, which quieted their curiosity, by turning their attention to her personal safety. They ordered a room to be prepared for her, entreated her to go to rest with all speed, and postpone any further account till the next day. With this request she most gladly complied, happy to be spared the embarrassment of enquiry, and rejoiced to be relieved from the fatigue of conversation.

Her night was restless and miserable: to know how Delvile would bear her flight was never a moment from her thoughts, and to hear whether he would obey or oppose his mother was her incessant wish. She was fixt, however, to be faithful in refusing to see him, and at least to suffer nothing new from her own enterprize or fault.

Early in the morning Mrs Harrel came to see her. She was eager to learn why, after invitations repeatedly refused, she was thus suddenly arrived without any; and she was still more eager to talk of herself, and relate the weary life she led thus shut up in the country, and confined to the society of her brother.

Cecilia evaded giving any immediate answer to her questions, and Mrs Harrel, happy in an opportunity to rehearse her own complaints, soon forgot that she had asked any, and, in a very short time, was perfectly, though imperceptibly, contented to be herself the only subject upon which they conversed.

But not such was the selfishness of Mr Arnott; and Cecilia, when she went down to breakfast, perceived with the utmost concern that he had passed a night as sleepless as her own. A visit so sudden, so unexpected, and so unaccountable, from an object that no discouragement could make him think of with indifference, had been a subject to him of conjecture and wonder that had revived all the hopes and the fears which had lately, though still unextinguished, lain dormant. The enquiries, however, which his sister had given up, he ventured not to renew, and thought himself but too happy in her presence, whatever might be the cause of her visit.

He perceived, however, immediately, the sadness that hung upon her mind, and his own was redoubled by the sight: Mrs Harrel, also, saw that she looked ill, but attributed it to the fatigue and fright of the preceding evening, well knowing that a similar accident would have made her ill herself, or fancy that she was so.

During breakfast, Cecilia sent for the postilion, to enquire of him how the man had fared, whose good-natured assistance in their distress had been so unfortunate to himself. He answered that he had turned

out to be a day labourer, who lived about half a mile off. And then, partly to gratify her own humanity, and partly to find any other employment for herself and friends than uninteresting conversation, she proposed that they should all walk to the poor man's habitation, and offer him some amends for the injury he had received. This was readily assented to, and the postilion directed them whither to go.

The place was a cottage, situated upon a common; they entered it without ceremony, and found a clean looking woman at work.

Cecilia enquired for her husband, and was told that he was gone out to day-labour.

"I am very glad to hear it," returned she; "I hope then he has got the better of the accident he met with last night?"

"It was not him, madam," said the woman, "met with the accident, it was John;—there he is, working in the garden."

To the garden then they all went, and saw him upon the ground, weeding.

The moment they approached he arose, and, without speaking, began to limp, for he could hardly walk, away.

"I am sorry, master," said Cecilia, "that you are so much hurt. Have you had anything put to your foot?"

The man made no answer, but still turned away from her; a glance, however, of his eye, which the next instant he fixed upon the ground, startled her; she moved round to look at him again,—and perceived Mr Belfield!

"Good God!" she exclaimed; but seeing him still retreat, she recollected in a moment how little he would be obliged to her for betraying him, and suffering him to go on, turned back to her party, and led the way again into the house.

As soon as the first emotion of her surprise was over, she enquired how long *John* had belonged to this cottage, and what was his way of life.

The woman answered he had only been with them a week, and that he went out to day-labour with her husband.

Cecilia then, finding their stay kept him from his employment, and willing to save him the distress of being seen by Mr Arnott or Mrs Harel, proposed their returning home. She grieved most sincerely at beholding in so melancholy an occupation a young man of such talents and abilities; she wished much to assist him, and began considering by what means it might be done, when, as they were walking from the cottage, a voice at some distance called out "Madam! Miss Beverley!" and, looking round, to her utter amazement she saw Belfield endeavouring to follow her.

She instantly stopt, and he advanced, his hat in his hand, and his whole air indicating he sought not to be disguised.

Surprised at this sudden change of behaviour, she then stept forward to meet him, accompanied by her friends: but when they came up to each other, she checked her desire of speaking, to leave him fully at liberty to make himself known, or keep concealed.

He bowed with a look of assumed gaiety and ease, but the deep scarlet that tinged his whole face manifested his internal confusion; and in a voice that attempted to sound lively, though its tremulous accents betrayed uneasiness and distress, he exclaimed, with a forced smile, "Is it possible Miss Beverley can deign to notice a poor miserable day-labourer such as I am? how will she be justified in the beau monde, when even the sight of such a wretch ought to fill her with horror? Henceforth let hysterics be blown to the winds, and let nerves be discarded from the female vocabulary, since a

lady so young and fair can stand this shock without hartshorn or fainting!"

"I am happy," answered Cecilia, "to find your spirits so good; yet my own, I must confess, are not raised by seeing you in this strange situation."

"My spirits!" cried he, with an air of defiance, "never were they better, never so good as at this moment. Strange as seems my situation, it is all that I wish; I have found out, at last, the true secret of happiness! that secret which so long I pursued in vain, but which always eluded my grasp, till the instant of despair arrived, when, slackening my pace, I gave it up as a phantom. Go from me, I cried, I will be cheated no more! thou airy bubble! thou fleeting shadow! I will live no longer in thy sight, since thy beams dazzle without warming me! Mankind seems only composed as matter for thy experiments, and I will quit the whole race, that thy delusions may be presented to me no more!"

This romantic flight, which startled even Cecilia, though acquainted with his character, gave to Mrs Harrel and Mr Arnott the utmost surprize; his appearance, and the account they had just heard of him, having by no means prepared them for such sentiments or such language.

"Is then this great secret of happiness," said Cecilia, "nothing, at last, but total seclusion from the world?"

"No, madam," answered he, "it is Labour with Independence."

Cecilia now wished much to ask some explanation of his affairs, but was doubtful whether he would gratify her before Mrs Harrel and Mr Arnott, and hurt to keep him standing, though he leant upon a stick; she told him, therefore, she would at present detain him no longer, but endeavour again to see him before she quitted her friends.

Mr Arnott then interfered, and desired his sister would entreat Miss Beverley to invite whom she pleased to his house.

Cecilia thanked him, and instantly asked Belfield to call upon her in the afternoon.

"No, madam, no," cried he, "I have done with visits and society! I will not so soon break through a system with much difficulty formed, when all my future tranquility depends upon adhering to it. The worthlessness of mankind has disgusted me with the world, and my resolution in quitting it shall be immoveable as its baseness."

"I must not venture then," said Cecilia, "to enquire—"

"Enquire, madam," interrupted he, with quickness, "what you please: there is nothing I will not answer to you,—to this lady, to this gentleman, to any and to every body. What can I wish to conceal, where I have nothing to gain or to lose? When first, indeed, I saw you, I involuntarily shrunk; a weak shame for a moment seized me, I felt fallen and debased, and I wished to avoid you: but a little recollection brought me back to my senses. And where, cried I, is the disgrace of exercising for my subsistence the strength with which I am endued? and why should I blush to lead the life which uncorrupted Nature first prescribed to man?"

"Well, then," said Cecilia, more and more interested to hear him, "if you will not visit us, will you at least permit us to return with you to some place where you can be seated?"

"I will with pleasure," cried he, "go to any place where you may be seated yourselves; but for me, I have ceased to regard accommodation or inconvenience."

They then all went back to the cottage, which was now empty, the woman being out at work.

"Will you then, Sir," said Cecilia, "give me leave to enquire whether Lord Vannelt is acquainted with your retirement, and if it will not much surprize and disappoint him?"

"Lord Vannelt," cried he, haughtily, "has no right to be surprised. I would have quitted *his* house, if no other, not even this cottage, had a roof to afford me shelter!"

"I am sorry, indeed, to hear it," said Cecilia; "I had hoped he would have known your value, and merited your regard."

"Ill-usage," answered he, "is as hard to relate as to be endured. There is commonly something pitiful in a complaint; and though oppression in a general sense provokes the wrath of mankind, the investigation of its minuter circumstances excites nothing but derision. Those who give the offence, by the worthy few may be hated, but those who receive it, by the world at large will be despised. Conscious of this, I disdained making any appeal; myself the only sufferer, I had a right to be the only judge, and, shaking off the base trammels of interest and subjection, I quitted the house in silent indignation, not chusing to remonstrate, where I desired not to be reconciled."

"And was there no mode of life," said Cecilia, "to adopt, but living with Lord Vannelt, or giving up the whole world?"

"I weighed every thing maturely," answered he, "before I made my determination, and I found it so much the most eligible, that I am certain I can never repent it. I had friends who would with pleasure have presented me to some other nobleman; but my whole heart revolted against leading that kind of life, and I would not, therefore, idly rove from one great man to another, adding ill-will to disgrace, and pursuing hope in defiance of common sense; no; when I quitted

Lord Vannelt, I resolved to give up patronage for ever.

"I retired to private lodgings to deliberate what next could be done. I had lived in many ways, I had been unfortunate or imprudent in all. The law I had tried, but its rudiments were tedious and disgusting; the army, too, but there found my mind more fatigued with indolence, than my body with action; general dissipation had then its turn, but the expence to which it led was ruinous, and self-reproach baffled pleasure while I pursued it; I have even—yes, there are few things I have left untried,—I have even,—for why now disguise it?—"

He stopt and coloured, but in a quicker voice presently proceeded.

"Trade, also, has had its share in my experiments; for that, in truth, I was originally destined,—but my education had ill suited me to such a destination, and the trader's first maxim I reversed, in lavishing when I ought to have accumulated.

"What, then, remained for me? to run over again the same irksome round I had not patience, and to attempt any thing new I was unqualified: money I had none; my friends I could bear to burthen no longer; a fortnight I lingered in wretched irresolution,—a simple accident at the end of it happily settled me; I was walking, one morning, in Hyde Park, forming a thousand plans for my future life, but quarrelling with them all; when a gentleman met me on horseback, from whom, at my Lord Vannelt's, I had received particular civilities; I looked another way not to be seen by him, and the change in my dress since I left his Lordship's made me easily pass unnoticed. He had rode on, however, but a few yards, before, by some accident or mismanagement, he had a fall from his horse. Forgetting all my caution, I flew instantly to

his assistance; he was bruised, but not otherwise hurt; I helpt him up, and he leant upon my arm; in my haste of enquiring how he had fared, I called him by his name. He knew me, but looked surprised at my appearance; he was speaking to me, however, with kindness, when seeing some gentlemen of his acquaintance galloping up to him, he hastily disengaged himself from me, and instantly beginning to recount to them what had happened, he sedulously looked another way, and joining his new companions, walked off without taking further notice of me. For a moment I was almost tempted to trouble him to come back; but a little recollection told me how ill he deserved my resentment, and bid me transfer it for the future from the pitiful individual to the worthless community.

"Here finished my deliberation; the disgust to the world which I had already conceived, this little incident confirmed; I saw it was only made for the great and the rich;—poor, therefore, and low, what had I to do in it? I determined to quit it for ever, and to end every disappointment, by crushing every hope.

"I wrote to Lord Vannelt to send my trunks to my mother; I wrote to my mother that I was well, and would soon let her hear more: I then paid off my lodgings, and 'shaking the dust from my feet,' bid a long adieu to London; and, committing my route to chance, stole on into the country, without knowing or caring which way.

"My first thought was simply to seek retirement, and to depend for my future repose upon nothing but a total seclusion from society: but my slow method of travelling gave me time for reflection, and reflection soon shewed me the error of this notion.

"Guilt, cried I, may, indeed, be avoided by solitude; but will misery? will regret? will deep dejection of mind? no; they will follow more assiduously than

ever; for what is there to oppose them, where neither business occupies the time, nor hope the imagination? where the past has left nothing but resentment, and the future opens only to a dismal, uninteresting void? No stranger to life, I knew human nature could not exist on such terms; still less a stranger to books, I respected the voice of wisdom and experience in the first of moralists, and most enlightened of men,* and reading the letter of Cowley, I saw the vanity and absurdity of *panting after solitude.*†

"I sought not, therefore, a cell; but, since I purposed to live for myself, I determined for myself also to think. Servility of imitation has ever been as much my scorn as servility of dependence; I resolved, therefore, to strike out something new, and no more to retire as every other man had retired, than to linger in the world as every other man had lingered.

"The result of all you now see. I found out this cottage, and took up my abode in it. I am here out of the way of all society, yet avoid the great evil of retreat, *having nothing to do.* I am constantly, not capriciously employed, and the exercise which benefits my health, imperceptibly raises my spirits in despight of adversity. I am removed from all temptation, I have scarce even the power to do wrong; I have no object for ambition, for repining I have no time:—I have found out, I repeat, the true secret of happiness, Labour with Independence."

He stopt; and Cecilia, who had listened to this narrative with a mixture of compassion, admiration and censure, was too much struck with its singularity to be readily able to answer it. Her curiosity to hear him had sprung wholly from her desire to assist him, and she had expected from his story to gather some hint upon which her services might be offered. But none

* Dr Johnson. † Life of Cowley, p. 34.

had occurred; he professed himself fully satisfied with his situation; and though reason and probability contradicted the profession, she could not venture to dispute it with any delicacy or prudence.

She thanked him, therefore, for his relation, with *many apologies for the trouble she had given him*, and added, "I must not express my concern for misfortunes which you seem to regard as conducive to your contentment, nor remonstrate at the step you have taken, since you have been led to it by choice, not necessity: but yet, you must pardon me if I cannot help hoping I shall some time see you happier, according to the common, however vulgar ideas of the rest of the world."

"No, never, never! I am sick of mankind, not from theory, but experience; and the precautions I have taken against mental fatigue, will secure me from *repentance, or any desire of change; for it is not the* active, but the indolent who weary; it is not the temperate, but the pampered who are capricious."

"Is your sister, Sir, acquainted with this change in your fortune and opinions?"

"Poor girl, no! She and her unhappy mother have borne but too long with my enterprizes and misfortunes. Even yet they would sacrifice whatever they possess to enable me to play once more the game so often lost; but I will not abuse their affection, nor suffer them again to be slaves to my caprices, nor dupes to their own delusive expectations. I have sent them word I am happy; I have not yet told them how or where. I fear much the affliction of their disappointment, and, for a while, shall conceal from them my situation, which they would fancy was disgraceful, and grieve at as cruel."

"And is it *not* cruel?" said Cecilia, "is labour indeed so sweet? and can you seriously derive happiness from what all others consider as misery?"

"Not sweet," answered he, "in itself; but sweet, most sweet and salutary in its effects. When I work, I forget all the world; my projects for the future, my disappointments from the past. Mental fatigue is overpowered by personal; I toil till I require rest, and that rest which nature, not luxury demands, leads not to idle meditation, but to sound, heavy, necessary sleep. I awake the next morning to the same thought-exiling business, work again till my powers are exhausted, and am relieved again at night by the same health-recruiting insensibility."

"And if this," cried Cecilia, "is the life of happiness, why have we so many complaints of the sufferings of the poor, and why so eternally do we hear of their hardships and distress?"

"They have known no other life. They are strangers, therefore, to the felicity of their lot. Had they mingled in the world, fed high their fancy with hope, and looked forward with expectation of enjoyment; had they been courted by the great, and offered with profusion adulation for their abilities, yet, even when starving, been offered nothing else!—had they seen an attentive circle wait all its entertainment from their powers, yet found themselves forgotten as soon as out of sight, and perceived themselves avoided when no longer buffoons!—Oh had they known and felt provocations such as these, how gladly would their resentful spirits turn from the whole unfeeling race, and how would they respect that noble and manly labour, which at once disentangles them from such subjugating snares, and enables them to fly the ingratitude they abhor! Without the contrast of vice, virtue unloved may be lovely; without the experience of misery, happiness is simply a dull privation of evil."

"And are you so content," cried Cecilia, "with your present situation, as even to think it offers you reparation for your past sufferings?"

"Content!" repeated he with energy, "O more than content, I am proud of my present situation! I glory in shewing to the world, I glory still more in shewing to myself, that those whom I cannot but despise I will not scruple to defy, and that where I have been treated unworthily, I will scorn to be *obliged*."

"But will you pardon me," said Cecilia, "should I ask again, why in quitting Lord Vannelt, you concluded no one else worthy a trial?"

"Because it was less my Lord Vannelt, madam, than my own situation, that disgusted me: for though I liked not his behaviour, I found him a man too generally esteemed to flatter myself better usage would await me in merely changing my abode, while my station was the same. I believe, indeed, he never meant to offend me; but I was offended the more that he should think me an object to receive indignity without knowing it. To have had this pointed out to him, would have been at once mortifying and vain; for delicacy, like taste, can only partially be taught, and will always be superficial and erring where it is not innate. Those wrongs, which though too trifling to resent, are too humiliating to be borne, speech can convey no idea of; the soul must feel, or the understanding can never comprehend them."

"But surely," said Cecilia, "though people of refinement are rare, they yet exist; why, then, remove yourself from the possibility of meeting with them?"

"Must I run about the nation," cried he, "proclaiming my distress, and describing my temper? telling the world that though dependent I demand respect as well as assistance; and publishing to mankind, that though poor I will accept no gifts if offered with contumely? Who will listen to such an account? who will care for my misfortunes, but as they may humble me to his service? who will hear my mortifications, but to say I

deserve them? what has the world to do with my *feelings and peculiarities? I know it too well to think* calamity will soften it; I need no new lessons to instruct me that to conquer affliction is more wise than to relate it."

"Unfortunate as you have been," said Cecilia, "I cannot wonder at your asperity; but yet, it is surely no more than justice to acknowledge, that hard-heartedness to distress is by no means the fault of the present times: on the contrary, it is scarce sooner made known, than every one is ready to contribute to its relief."

"And how contribute?" cried he, "by a paltry donation of money? Yes, the man whose only want is a few guineas, may, indeed, obtain them; but he who asks kindness and protection, whose oppressed spirit calls for consolation even more than his ruined fortune for repair, how is his struggling soul, if superior to his fate, to brook the ostentation of patronage, and the insolence of condescension? Yes, yes, the world *will save the poor beggar who is starving; but the* fallen wretch, who will not cringe for his support, may consume in his own wretchedness without pity and without help!"

Cecilia now saw that the wound his sensibility had *received was too painful for argument, and too recent* immediately to be healed. She forbore, therefore, to detain him any longer, but expressing her best wishes, without venturing to hint at her services, she arose, and they all took their leave;—Belfield hastening, as they went, to return to the garden, where, looking over the hedge as they passed, they saw him employed again in weeding, with the eagerness of a man who pursues his favourite occupation.

Cecilia half forgot her own anxieties and sadness, in the concern which she felt for this unfortunate and extraordinary young man. She wished much to devise

some means for drawing him from a life of such hardship and obscurity; but what to a man thus "jealous in honour," thus scrupulous in delicacy, could she propose, without more risk of offence, than probability of obliging? His account had, indeed, convinced her how much he stood in need of assistance, but it had shewn her no less how fastidious he would be in receiving it.

Nor was she wholly without fear that an earnest solicitude to serve him, his youth, talents, and striking manners considered, might occasion even in himself a misconstruction of her motives, such as she already had given birth to in his forward and partial mother.

The present, therefore, all circumstances weighed, seemed no season for her liberality, which she yet resolved to exert the first moment it was un-opposed by propriety.

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Chapter 5.

A CONTEST.

THE rest of the day was passed in discussing this adventure; but in the evening, Cecilia's interest in it was all sunk, by the reception of the following letter from Mrs Delvile.

To Miss Beverley.

I grieve to interrupt the tranquillity of a retirement so judiciously chosen, and I lament the necessity of again calling to trial the virtue of which the exertion, though so captivating, is so painful; but alas, my excellent young friend, we came not hither to enjoy, but to suffer; and happy only are those whose sufferings have neither by folly been sought, nor by guilt been merited,

but arising merely from the imperfection of humanity, have been resisted with fortitude, or endured with patience.

I am informed of your virtuous steadiness, which corresponds with my expectations, while it excites my respect. All further conflict I had hoped to have saved you; and to the triumph of your goodness I had trusted for the recovery of your peace: but Mortimer has disappointed me, and our work is still unfinished.

He avers that he is solemnly engaged to you, and in pleading to me his honour, he silences both expostulation and authority. From your own words alone will he acknowledge his dismission; and notwithstanding my reluctance to impose upon you this task, I cannot silence or quiet him without making the request.

For a purpose such as this, can you, then, admit us? Can you bear with your own lips to confirm the irrevocable decision? You will feel, I am sure, for the unfortunate Mortimer, and it was earnestly my desire to spare you the sight of his affliction; yet such is my confidence in your prudence, that since I find him bent upon seeing you, I am not without hope, that from witnessing the greatness of your mind, the interview may rather calm than inflame him.

This proposal you will take into consideration, and if you are able, upon such terms, to again meet my son, we will wait upon you together, where and when you will appoint; but if the gentleness of your nature will make the effort too severe for you, scruple not to decline it, for Mortimer, when he knows your pleasure, will submit to it as he ought.

Adieu, most amiable and but too lovely Cecilia; whatever you determine, be sure of my concurrence, for nobly have you earned, and ever must you retain, the esteem, the affection, and the gratitude of

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

"Alas," cried Cecilia, "when shall I be at rest? when cease to be persecuted by new conflicts! Oh why must I so often, so cruelly, though so reluctantly, reject and reprove the man who of all men I wish to accept and to please!"

But yet, though repining at this hard necessity, she hesitated not a moment in complying with Mrs Delvile's request, and immediately sent an answer that she would meet her the next morning at Mrs Charlton's.

She then returned to the parlour, and apologized to Mrs Harrel and Mr Arnott for the abruptness of her visit, and the suddenness of her departure. Mr Arnott heard her in silent dejection; and Mrs Harrel used all the persuasion in her power to prevail with her to stay, her presence being some relief to her solitude: but finding it ineffectual, she earnestly pressed her to hasten her entrance into her own house, that their absence might be shortened, and their meeting more sprightly.

Cecilia passed the night in planning her behaviour for the next day; she found how much was expected from her by Mrs Delvile, who had even exhorted her to decline the interview if doubtful of her own strength. Delvile's firmness in insisting the refusal should come directly from herself, surprised, gratified and perplexed her in turn; she had imagined, that from the moment of the discovery, he would implicitly have submitted to the award of a parent at once so reverenced and so beloved, and how he had summoned courage to contend with her she could not conjecture: yet that courage and that contention astonished not more than they soothed her, since, from her knowledge of his filial tenderness, she considered them as the most indubitable proofs she had yet received of the fervour and constancy of his regard for her. But would he, when she had ratified the decision of his mother, forbear all further struggle, and for ever yield up all pretensions to her? this was the

point upon which her uncertainty turned, and the ruling subject of her thoughts and meditation.

To be steady, however, herself, be his conduct what it might, was invariably her intention, and was all her ambition: yet earnestly she wished the meeting over, for she dreaded to see the sorrow of Delvile, and she dreaded still more the susceptibility of her own heart.

The next morning, to her great concern, Mr Arnott was waiting in the hall when she came down stairs, and so much grieved at her departure, that he handed her to the chaise without being able to speak to her, and hardly heard her thanks and compliments but by recollection after she was gone.

She arrived at Mrs Charlton's very early, and found her old friend in the same state she had left her. She communicated to her the purpose of her return, and begged she would keep her granddaughters up stairs, that the conference in the parlour might be uninterrupted and unheard.

She then made a forced and hasty breakfast, and went down to be ready to receive them. They came not till eleven o'clock, and the time of her waiting was passed in agonies of expectation.

At length they were announced, and at length they entered the room.

Cecilia, with her utmost efforts for courage, could hardly stand to receive them. They came in together, but Mrs Delvile, advancing before her son, and endeavouring so to stand as to intercept his view of her, with the hope that in a few instants her emotion would be less visible, said, in the most soothing accents, "What honour Miss Beverley does us by permitting this visit! I should have been sorry to have left Suffolk without the satisfaction of again seeing you; and my son, sensible of the high respect he owes you, was most

unwilling to be gone, before he had paid you his devoirs."

Cecilia courtsied; but depressed by the cruel task which awaited her, had no power to speak; and Mrs Delvile, finding she still trembled, made her sit down, and drew a chair next to her.

Mean while Delvile, with an emotion far more violent, because wholly unrestrained, waited impatiently till the ceremonial of the reception was over, and then, approaching Cecilia, in a voice of perturbation and resentment, said, "In this presence, at least, I hope I may be heard; though my letters have been unanswered, my visits refused, though inexorably you have flown me——"

"Mortimer," interrupted Mrs Delvile, "forget not that what I have told you is irrevocable; you now meet Miss Beverley for no other purpose than to give and to receive a mutual release of all tie or engagement with each other."

"Pardon me, madam," cried he, "this is a condition to which I have never assented. I come not to release, but to claim her! I am hers, and hers wholly! I protest it in the face of the world! The time, therefore, is now past for the sacrifice which you demand, since scarce are you more my mother, than I consider her as my wife."

Cecilia, amazed at this dauntless declaration, now almost lost her fear in her surprise; while Mrs Delvile, with an air calm though displeased, answered, "This is not a point to be at present discussed, and I had hoped you knew better what was due to your auditors. I only consented to this interview as a mark of your respect for Miss Beverley, to whom in propriety it belongs to break off this unfortunate connexion."

Cecilia, who at this call could no longer be silent, now gathered fortitude to say, "Whatever tie or oblig-

tion may be supposed to depend upon me, I have already relinquished; and I am now ready to declare——"

"That you wholly give me up?" interrupted Delvile, "is that what you would say?—Oh how have I offended you? how have I merited a displeasure that can draw upon me such a sentence?—Answer, speak to me, Cecilia, what is it I have done?"

"Nothing, Sir," said Cecilia, confounded at this language in the presence of his mother, "you have done nothing,—but yet—"

"Yet what?—have you conceived to me an aversion? has any dreadful and horrible antipathy succeeded to your esteem?—tell, tell me without disguise, do you hate, do you abhor me?"

Cecilia sighed, and turned away her head; and Mrs Delvile indignantly exclaimed, "What madness and absurdity! I scarce know you under the influence of such irrational violence. Why will you interrupt Miss Beverley in the only speech you ought to hear from her? Why, at once, oppress her, and irritate me, by words of more passion than reason? Go on, charming girl, finish what so wisely, so judiciously you were beginning, and then you shall be released from this turbulent persecution."

"No, madam, she must not go on!" cried Delvile, "if she does not utterly abhor me, I will not *suffer* her to go on;—Pardon, pardon me, Cecilia, but your too exquisite delicacy is betraying not only my happiness, but your own. Once more, therefore, I conjure you to hear me, and then if, deliberately and unbiassed, you renounce me, I will never more distress you by resisting your decree."

Cecilia, abashed and changing colour, was silent, and he proceeded.

"All that has past between us, the vows I have offered you of faith, constancy and affection, the con-

sent I obtained from you to be legally mine, the bond of settlement I have had drawn up, and the high honour you conferred upon me in suffering me to lead you to the altar,—all these particulars are already known to so many, that the least reflection must convince you they will soon be concealed from none: tell me, then, if your own fame pleads not for me, and if the scruples which lead you to refuse, by taking another direction, will not, with much more propriety, urge, nay enjoin you to accept me!—You hesitate at least,—O Miss Beverley!—I see in that hesitation——"

"Nothing, nothing!" cried she, hastily, and checking her rising irresolution; "there is nothing for you to see, but that every way I now turn I have rendered myself miserable!"

"Mortimer," said Mrs Delvile, seized with terror as she penetrated into the mental yielding of Cecilia, "you have now spoken to Miss Beverley; and unwilling as I am to obtrude upon her our difference of sentiment, it is necessary, since she has heard you, that I, also, should claim her attention."

"First let her speak!" cried Delvile, who in her apparent wavering built new hopes, "first let her answer what she has already deigned to listen to."

"No, first let her hear!" cried Mrs Delvile, "for so only can she judge what answer will reflect upon her most honour."

Then, solemnly turning to Cecilia, she continued: "You see here, Miss Beverley, a young man who passionately adores you, and who forgets in his adoration friends, family, and connections, the opinions in which he has been educated, the honour of his house, his own former views, and all his primitive sense of duty, both public and private!—A passion built on such a defalcation of principle renders him unworthy your acceptance; and not more ignoble for him would be a union which

would blot his name from the injured stock whence he sprung, than indelicate for you, who upon such terms ought to despise him."

"Heavens, madam," exclaimed Delvile, "what a speech!"

"O never," cried Cecilia, rising, "may I hear such another! Indeed, madam, there is no occasion to probe me so deeply, for I would not now enter your family, for all that the whole world could offer me!"

"At length, then, madam," cried Delvile, turning reproachfully to his mother, "are you satisfied? is your purpose now answered? and is the dagger you have transfixed in my heart sunk deep enough to appease you?"

"O could I draw it out," cried Mrs Delvile, "and leave upon it no stain of ignominy, with what joy should my own bosom receive it, to heal the wound I have most compulsatorily inflicted!—Were this excellent young creature portionless, I would not hesitate in giving my consent; every claim of interest would be overbalanced by her virtues, and I would not grieve to see you poor, where so conscious you were happy; but here to concede, would annihilate every hope with which hitherto I have looked up to my son."

"Let us now, then, madam," said Cecilia, "break up this conference. I have spoken, I have heard, the decree is past, and therefore,"—

"You are indeed an angel!" cried Mrs Delvile, rising and embracing her; "and never can I reproach my son with what has passed, when I consider for what an object the sacrifice was planned. *You* cannot be unhappy, you have purchased peace by the exercise of virtue, and the close of every day will bring to you a reward, in the sweets of a self-approving mind.—But we will part, since you think it right; I do wrong to occasion any delay."

"No, we will *not* part!" cried Delvile, with encreasing vehemence; "if you force me, madam, from her, you will drive me to distraction! What is there in this world that can offer me a recompense? And what can pride even to the proudest afford as an equivalent? Her perfections you acknowledge, her greatness of mind is like your own; she has generously given me her heart,—Oh sacred and fascinating charge! Shall I, after such a deposite, consent to an eternal separation? Repeal, repeal your sentence, my Cecilia! let us live to ourselves and our consciences, and leave the vain prejudices of the world to those who can be paid by them for the loss of all besides!"

"Is this conflict, then," said Mrs Delvile, "to last for-ever? Oh end it, Mortimer, finish it, and make me happy! she is just, and will forgive you, she is noble-minded, and will honour you. Fly, then, at this critical moment, for in flight alone is your safety; and then will your father see the son of his hopes, and then shall the fond blessings of your idolizing mother soothe all your affliction, and soften all your regret!"

"Oh madam!" cried Delvile, "for mercy, for humanity, forbear this cruel supplication!"

"Nay, more than supplication, you have my commands; commands you have never yet disputed, and misery, ten-fold misery, will follow their disobedience. Hear me, Mortimer, for I speak prophetically; I know your heart, I know it to be formed for rectitude and duty, or destined by their neglect to repentance and horror."

Delvile, struck by these words, turned suddenly from them both, and in gloomy despondence walked to the other end of the room. Mrs Delvile perceived the moment of her power, and determined to pursue the blow: taking, therefore, the hand of Cecilia, while her eyes sparkled with the animation of reviving hope, "See," she cried, pointing to her son, "see if I am deceived! can

he bear even the suggestion of future contrition! Think you when it falls upon him, he will support it better? No; he will sink under it. And you, pure as you are of mind, and steadfast in principle, what would your chance be of happiness with a man who never erring till he knew you, could never look at you without regret, be his fondness what it might?"

"Oh madam," cried the greatly shocked Cecilia, "let him, then, see me no more!—take, take him all to yourself! forgive, console him! I will not have the misery of involving him in repentance, nor of incurring the reproaches of the mother he so much reverences!"

"Exalted creature!" cried Mrs Delvile; "tenderness such as this would confer honour upon a monarch." Then, calling out exultingly to her son, "See," she added, "how great a woman can act, when stimulated by generosity, and a just sense of duty! Follow then, at least, the example you ought to have led, and deserve my esteem and love, or be content to forego them."

"And can I only deserve them," said Delvile, in a tone of the deepest anguish, "by a compliance to which not merely my happiness, but my reason must be sacrificed? What honour do I injure that is not factitious? *What evil threatens our union, that is not imaginary?* In the general commerce of the world it may be right to *yield to its prejudices, but in matters of serious importance*, it is weakness to be shackled by scruples so *frivolous, and it is cowardly to be governed by the* customs we condemn. Religion and the laws of our country *should then alone be consulted, and where* those are neither opposed nor infringed, we should hold ourselves *superior to all other considerations.*"

"Mistaken notions!" said Mrs Delvile; "and how long do you flatter yourself this independent happiness would endure? How long could you live contented by mere self-gratification, in defiance of the censure of man-

kind, the renunciation of your family, and the curses of your father?"

"The curses of my father!" repeated he, starting and shuddering, "O no, he could never be so barbarous!"

"He could," said she, steadily, "nor do I doubt but he would. If now, however, you are affected by the prospect of his disclaiming you, think but what you will feel when first forbid to appear before either of us! and think of your remorse for involving Miss Beverley in such disgrace!"

"O speak not such words!" cried he, with agonizing earnestness, "to disgrace her,——to be banished by you,——present not, I conjure you, such scenes to my imagination!"

"Yet would they be unavoidable," continued she; "nor have I said to you all; blinded as you now are by passion, your nobler feelings are only obscured, not extirpated; think, then, how they will all rise in revenge of your insulted dignity, when your name becomes a stranger to your ears, and you are first saluted by one so meanly adopted!—"

"Hold, hold, madam," interrupted he, "this is more than I can bear!"

"Heavens!" still continued she, disregarding his entreaty, "what in the universe can pay you for that first moment of indignity! Think of it well ere you proceed, and anticipate your sensations, lest the shock should wholly overcome you. How will the blood of your wronged ancestors rise into your guilty cheeks, and how will your heart throb with secret shame and reproach, when wished joy upon your marriage by the name of *Mr Beverley!*"

Delvile, stung to the soul, attempted not any answer, but walked about the room in the utmost disorder of mind. Cecilia would have retired, but feared irritating him to some extravagance; and Mrs Delvile, looking

after him, added "For myself, I would still see, for I should pity your wife,——but NEVER would I behold my son when sunk into an object of compassion!"

"It shall not be!" cried he, in a transport of rage; "cease, cease to distract me!—be content, madam,—you have conquered!"

"Then you are my son!" cried she, rapturously embracing him; "now I know again my Mortimer! now I see the fair promise of his upright youth, and the flattering completion of my maternal expectations!"

Cecilia, finding all thus concluded, desired nothing so much as to congratulate them on their reconciliation; but having only said "Let *me*, too,—" her voice failed her, she stopt short, and hoping she had been unheard, would have glided out of the room.

But Delvile, penetrated and tortured, yet delighted at this sensibility, broke from his mother, and seizing her hand, exclaimed, "Oh Miss Beverley, if *you* are not happy——"

"I am! I am!" cried she, with quickness; "let me pass,—and think no more of me."

"That voice,—those looks,—" cried he, still holding her, "they speak not serenity!—Oh if I have injured your peace,—if that heart, which, pure as angels, deserves to be as sacred from sorrow, through my means, or for my sake, suffers any diminution of tranquility—"

"None, none!" interrupted she, with precipitation.

"I know well," cried he, "your greatness of soul; and *if this dreadful sacrifice gives lasting torture only* to myself,—if of *your* returning happiness I could be assured,—I would struggle to bear it."

"You *may* be assured of it," cried she, with reviving dignity, "I have no right to expect escaping all calamity, but while I share the common lot, I will submit to it without repining."

"Heaven then bless, and hovering angels watch you!" cried he, and letting go her hand, he ran hastily out of the room.

"Oh Virtue, how bright is thy triumph!" exclaimed Mrs Delvile, flying up to Cecilia, and folding her in her arms; "Noble, incomparable young creature! I knew not that so much worth was compatible with human frailty!"

But the heroism of Cecilia, in losing its object, lost its force; she sighed, she could not speak, tears gushed into her eyes, and kissing Mrs Delvile's hand with a look that shewed her inability to converse with her, she hastened, though scarce able to support herself, away, with intention to shut herself up in her own apartment: and Mrs Delvile, who perceived that her utmost fortitude was exhausted, opposed not her going, and wisely forbore to encrease her emotion, by following her even with her blessings.

But when she came into the hall, she started, and could proceed no further; for there she beheld Delvile, who in too great agony to be seen, had stopt to recover some composure before he quitted the house.

At the first sound of an opening door, he was hastily escaping; but perceiving Cecilia, and discerning her situation, he more hastily turned back, saying, "Is it possible?—To *me* were you coming?"

She shook her head, and made a motion with her hand to say no, and would then have gone on.

"You are weeping!" cried he, "you are pale!—— Oh Miss Beverley! is this your happiness!"

"I am very well,—" cried she, not knowing what she answered, "I am quite well,—pray go,—I am very——" her words died away inarticulated.

"O what a voice is that!" exclaimed he, "it pierces my very soul!"

Mrs Delvile now came to the parlour door, and

looked aghast at the situation in which she saw them: Cecilia again moved on, and reached the stairs, but tottered, and was obliged to cling to the banisters.

"O suffer me to support you," cried he; "you are not able to stand,—whither is it you would go?"

"Any where,—I don't know,—" answered she, in faltering accents, "but if you would leave me, I should be well."

And, turning from him, she walked again towards the parlour, finding by her shaking frame, the impossibility of getting unaided up the stairs.

"Give me your hand, my love," said Mrs Delvile, cruelly alarmed by this return; and the moment they re-entered the parlour, she said impatiently to her son, "Mortimer, why are you not gone?"

He heard her not, however; his whole attention was upon Cecilia, who, sinking into a chair, hid her face against Mrs Delvile: but, reviving in a few moments, and blushing at the weakness she had betrayed, she raised her head, and, with an assumed serenity, said, "I am better,—much better,——I was rather sick,—but it is over; and now, if you will excuse me, I will go to my own room."

She then arose, but her knees trembled, and her head was giddy, and again seating herself, she forced a faint smile, and said, "Perhaps I had better keep quiet."

"Can I bear this!" cried Delvile, "no, it shakes all my resolution!—loveliest and most beloved Cecilia! forgive my rash declaration, which I hear retract and forswear, and which no false pride, no worthless vanity shall again surprise from me!——raise, then, your eyes—"

"Hot-headed young man!" interrupted Mrs Delvile, with an air of haughty displeasure, "if you cannot be rational, at least be silent. Miss Beverley, we will both leave him."

Shame, and her own earnestness, now restored some strength to Cecilia, who read with terror in the looks of Mrs Delvile the passions with which she was agitated, and instantly obeyed her by rising; but her son, who inherited a portion of her own spirit, rushed between them both and the door, and exclaimed, "Stay, madam, stay! I cannot let you go: I see your intention, I see your dreadful purpose; you will work upon the feelings of Miss Beverley, you will extort from her a promise to see me no more!"

"Oppose not my passing!" cried Mrs Delvile, whose voice, face and manner spoke the encreasing disturbance of her soul; "I have but too long talked to you in vain; I must now take some better method for the security of the honour of my family."

This moment appeared to Delvile decisive; and casting off in desperation all timidity and restraint, he suddenly sprang forward, and snatching the hand of Cecilia from his mother, he exclaimed, "I cannot, I will not give her up!—nor now, madam, nor ever! —I protest it most solemnly! I affirm it by my best hopes! I swear it by all that I hold sacred!"

Grief and horror next to frenzy at a disappointment thus unexpected, and thus peremptory, rose in the face of Mrs Delvile, who, striking her hand upon her forehead, cried, "My brain is on fire!" and rushed out of the room.

Cecilia had now no difficulty to disengage herself from Delvile, who, shocked at the exclamation, and confounded by the sudden departure of his mother, hastened eagerly to pursue her: she had only flown into the next parlour; but, upon following her thither, what was his dread and his alarm, when he saw her extended upon the floor, her face, hands and neck all covered with blood! "Great Heaven!" he exclaimed, prostrating himself by her side, "what is it

you have done!—where are you wounded?—what direful curse have you denounced against your son?"

Not able to speak, she angrily shook her head, and indignantly made a motion with her hand, that commanded him from her sight.

Cecilia, who had followed, though half dead with terror, had yet the presence of mind to ring the bell. A servant came immediately; and Delvile, starting up from his mother, ordered him to fetch the first surgeon or physician he could find.

The alarm now brought the rest of the servants into the room, and Mrs Delvile suffered herself to be raised from the ground, and seated in a chair; she was still silent, but shewed a disgust to any assistance from her son, that made him deliver her into the hands of the servants, while, in speechless agony, he only looked on and watched her.

Neither did Cecilia, though forgetting her own sorrow, and no longer sensible of personal weakness, venture to approach her: uncertain what had happened, she yet considered herself as the ultimate cause of this dreadful scene, and feared to risk the effect of the smallest additional emotion.

The servant returned with a surgeon in a few minutes: Cecilia, unable to wait and hear what he would say, glided hastily out of the room; and Delvile, in still greater agitation, followed her quick into the next parlour; but having eagerly advanced to speak to her, he turned precipitately about, and hurrying into the hall, walked in hasty steps up and down it, without courage to enquire what was passing.

At length the surgeon came out: Delvile flew to him, and stopt him, but could ask no question. His countenance, however, rendered words unnecessary; the surgeon understood him, and said, "The lady will do very well; she has burst a blood vessel, but I think

it will be of no consequence. She must be kept quiet and easy, and upon no account suffered to talk, or to use any exertion."

Delvile now let him go, and flew himself into a corner to return thanks to heaven that the evil, however great, was less than he had at first apprehended. He then went into the parlour to Cecilia, eagerly calling out, "Heaven be praised, my mother has not voluntarily cursed me!"

"O now then," cried Cecilia, "once more make her bless you! the violence of her agitation has already almost destroyed her, and her frame is too weak for this struggle of contending passions;—go to her, then, and calm the tumult of her spirits, by acquiescing wholly in her will, and being to her again the son she thinks she has lost!"

"Alas!" said he, in a tone of the deepest dejection; "I have been preparing myself for that purpose, and waited but your commands to finally determine me."

"Let us both go to her instantly," said Cecilia; "the least delay may be fatal."

She now led the way, and approaching Mrs Delvile, who, faint and weak, was seated upon an arm chair, and resting her head upon the shoulder of a maid servant, said, "Lean, dearest madam, upon *me*, and speak not, but hear us!"

She then took the place of the maid, and desired her and the other servants to go out of the room. Delvile advanced, but his mother's eye, recovering, at his sight, its wonted fire, darted upon him a glance of such displeasure, that, shuddering with the apprehension of inflaming again those passions which threatened her destruction, he hastily sank on one knee, and abruptly exclaimed, "Look at me with less abhorrence, for I come but to resign myself to your will."

"Mine, also," cried Cecilia, "that will shall be;

you need not speak it, we know it, and here solemnly we promise that we will separate for ever."

"Revive, then, my mother," said Delvile, "rely upon our plighted honours, and think only of your health, for your son will never more offend you."

Mrs Delvile, much surprised, and strongly affected, held out her hand to him, with a look of mingled compassion and obligation, and dropping her head upon the bosom of Cecilia, who with her other arm she pressed towards her, she burst into an agony of tears.

"Go, go, Sir!" said Cecilia, cruelly alarmed, "you have said all that is necessary; leave Mrs Delvile now, and she will be more composed."

Delvile instantly obeyed, and then his mother, whose mouth still continued to fill with blood, though it gushed not from her with the violence it had begun, was prevailed upon by the prayers of Cecilia to consent to be conveyed into her room; and, as her immediate removal to another house might be dangerous, she complied also, though very reluctantly, with her urgent entreaties, that she would take entire possession of it till the next day.

This point gained, Cecilia left her, to communicate what had passed to Mrs Charlton; but was told by one of the servants that Mr Delvile begged first to speak with her in the next room.

She hesitated for a moment whether to grant this request; but recollecting it was right to acquaint him with his mother's intention of staying all night, she went to him.

"How indulgent you are," cried he, in a melancholy voice, as she opened the door; "I am now going post to Dr Lyster, whom I shall entreat to come hither instantly; but I am fearful of again disturbing my mother, and must therefore rely upon you to acquaint her what is become of me."

"Most certainly; I have begged her to remain here to-night, and I hope I shall prevail with her to continue with me till Dr Lyster's arrival; after which she will, doubtless, be guided either in staying longer, or removing elsewhere, by his advice."

"You are all goodness," said he, with a deep sigh; "and how I shall support—but I mean not to return hither, at least not to this house,—unless, indeed, Dr Lyster's account should be alarming. I leave my mother, therefore, to your kindness, and only hope, only entreat, that your own health,—your own peace of mind—neither by attendance upon her—by anxiety—by pity for her son—"

He stopt, and seemed gasping for breath; Cecilia turned from him to hide her emotion, and he proceeded with a rapidity of speech that shewed his terror of continuing with her any longer, and his struggle with himself to be gone: "The promise you have made in both our names to my mother, I shall hold myself bound to observe. I see, indeed, that her reason or her life would fall the sacrifice of further opposition: of myself, therefore, it is no longer time to think.—I take of you no leave—I cannot! yet I would fain tell you the high reverence—but it is better to say nothing—"

"Much better," cried Cecilia, with a forced and faint smile; "lose not, therefore, an instant, but hasten to this good Dr Lyster."

"I will," answered he, going to the door; but there, stopping and turning round, "one thing I should yet," he added, "wish to say,—I have been impetuous, violent, unreasonable,—with shame and with regret I recollect how impetuous, and how unreasonable: I have persecuted, where I ought in silence to have submitted; I have reproached, where I ought in candour to have approved; and in the vehemence with which I have pursued you, I have censured that

very dignity of conduct which has been the basis of my admiration, my esteem, my devotion! but never can I forget, and never without fresh wonder remember, the sweetness with which you have borne with me, even when most I offended you. For this impatience, this violence, this inconsistency, I now most sincerely beg your pardon; and if, before I go, you could so far condescend as to pronounce my forgiveness, with a lighter heart, I think, I should quit you."

"Do not talk of forgiveness," said Cecilia, "you have never offended me; I always knew—always was sure—always imputed—" she stopt, unable to proceed.

Deeply penetrated by her apparent distress, he with difficulty restrained himself from falling at her feet; but after a moment's pause and recollection, he said, "I understand the generous indulgence you have shewn me, an indulgence I shall ever revere, and ever grieve to have abused. I ask you not to remember me,—far, far happier do I wish you than such a remembrance could make you; but I will pain the humanity of your disposition no longer. You will tell my mother—but no matter!—*Heaven preserve you, my angelic Cecilia!* —Miss Beverley, I mean,—Heaven guide, protect, and bless you! And should I see you no more, should this be the last sad moment——"

He paused, but presently recovering himself, added, "May I hear, at least, of your tranquillity, for that alone can have any chance to quiet or repress the anguish I feel here!"

He then abruptly retreated, and ran out of the house.

Cecilia for a while remained almost stupified with sorrow; she forgot Mrs Delvile, she forgot Mrs Charlton, she forgot her own design of apologizing to

one, or assisting the other: she continued in the posture in which he had left her, quite without motion, and almost without sensibility.

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Chapter bij.

A MESSAGE.

FROM this lethargy of sadness Cecilia was soon, however, awakened by the return of the surgeon, who had brought with him a physician to consult upon Mrs Delvile's situation. Terror for the mother once more drove the son from her thoughts, and she waited with the most apprehensive impatience to hear the result of the consultation. The physician declined giving any positive opinion, but, having written a prescription, only repeated the injunction of the surgeon, that she should be kept extremely quiet, and on no account be suffered to talk.

Cecilia, though shocked and frightened at the occasion, was yet by no means sorry at an order which thus precluded all conversation; unfitted for it by her own misery, she was glad to be relieved from all necessity of imposing upon herself the irksome task of finding subjects for discourse to which she was wholly indifferent, while obliged with sedulity to avoid those by which alone her mind was occupied.

The worthy Mrs Charlton heard the events of the morning with the utmost concern, but charged her grand-daughters to assist her young friend in doing the honours of her house to Mrs Delvile, while she ordered another apartment to be prepared for Cecilia, to whom she administered all the consolation her friendly zeal could suggest.

Cecilia, however unhappy, had too just a way of

thinking to indulge in selfish grief, where occasion called her to action for the benefit of others: scarce a moment, therefore now did she allow to sorrow and herself, but assiduously bestowed the whole of her time upon her two sick friends, dividing her attention according to their own desire or convenience, without consulting or regarding any choice of her own. Choice, indeed, she had none; she loved Mrs Charlton, she revered Mrs Delvile; the warmest wish with which her heart glowed, was the recovery of both, but too deep was her affliction to receive pleasure from either.

Two days passed thus, during which the constancy of her attendance, which at another time would have fatigued her, proved the only relief she was capable of receiving. Mrs Delvile was evidently affected by her vigilant tenderness, but seemed equally desirous with herself to make use of the prohibition to speech as an excuse for uninterrupted silence. She enquired not even after her son, though the eagerness of her look towards the door whenever it was opened, shewed either a hope, or an apprehension that he might enter. Cecilia wished to tell her whither he was gone, but dreaded trusting her voice with his name; and their silence, after a while, seemed so much by mutual consent, that she had soon as little courage as she had inclination to break it.

The arrival of Dr Lyster gave her much satisfaction, for upon him rested her hopes of Mrs Delvile's re-establishment. He sent for her down stairs, to enquire whether he was expected; and hearing that he was not, desired her to announce him, as the smallest emotion might do mischief.

She returned up stairs, and after a short preparation, said, "Your favourite Dr Lyster, madam, is come, and I shall be much the happier for having you under his care."

"Dr Lyster?" cried she, "who sent for him?"

"I believe—I fancy—Mr Delvile fetched him."

"My son?—is he here, then?"

"No,—he went, the moment he left you, for Dr Lyster,—and Dr Lyster is come by himself."

"Does he write to you?"

"No, indeed!—he writes not—he comes not—dearest madam be satisfied, he will do neither to *me* ever more!"

"Exemplary young man!" cried she, in a voice hardly audible, "how great is his loss!—unhappy Mortimer!—ill-fated, and ill-rewarded!"

She sighed, and said no more; but this short conversation, the only one which had passed between them since her illness, agitated her so much, that Dr Lyster, who now came up stairs, found her in a state of trembling and weakness that both alarmed and surprised him. Cecilia, glad of an opportunity to be gone, left the room, and sent, by Dr Lyster's desire, for the physician and surgeon who had already attended.

After they had been some time with their patient, they retired to a consultation, and when it was over, Dr Lyster waited upon Cecilia in the parlour, and assured her he had no apprehension of danger for Mrs Delvile, "Though, for another week," he added, "I would have her continue *your* patient, as she is not yet fit to be removed. But pray mind that she is kept quiet; let nobody go near her, not even her own son. By the way he is waiting for me at the inn, so I'll just speak again to his mother, and be gone."

Cecilia was well pleased by this accidental information, to learn both the anxiety of Delvile for his mother, and the steadiness of his forbearance for himself. When Dr Lyster came down stairs again, "I shall stay," he said, "till to-morrow, but I hope she will be able in

another week to get to Bristol. In the mean time I shall leave her, I see, with an excellent nurse. But, my good young lady, in your care of her, don't neglect yourself; I am not quite pleased with your looks, though it is but an old fashioned speech to tell you so.—What have you been doing to yourself?"

"Nothing;" said she, a little embarrassed; "but had you not better have some tea?"

"Why yes, I think I had;—but what shall I do with my young man?"

Cecilia understood the hint, but coloured, and made no answer.

"He is waiting for me," he continued, "at the inn; however, I never yet knew the young man I would prefer to a young woman, so if you will give me some tea here, I shall certainly jilt him."

Cecilia instantly rang the bell, and ordered tea.

"Well now," said he, "remember the sin of this breach of appointment lies wholly at your door. I shall tell him you laid violent hands on me; and if that is not enough to excuse me, I shall desire he will try whether he could be more of a stoic with you himself."

"I think I must *un*order the tea," said she, with what gaiety she could assume, "if I am to be responsible for any mischief from your drinking it."

"No, no, you shan't be off now; but pray would it be quite out of rule for you to send and ask him to come to us?"

"*Why I believe—I think—" said she, stammering,* "it's very likely he may be engaged."

"Well, well, I don't mean to propose any violent incongruity. You must excuse my blundering; I understand but little of the *etiquette* of young ladies. 'Tis a science too intricate to be learned without more

study than we plodding men of business can well spare time for. However, when I have done *writing* prescriptions, I will set about *reading* them, provided you will be my instructress."

Cecilia, though ashamed of a charge in which prudery and affectation were implied, was compelled to submit to it, as either to send for Delvile, or explain her objections, was equally impossible. The Miss Charltons, therefore, joined them, and they went to tea.

Just as they had done, a note was delivered to Dr Lyster; "see here," cried he, when he had read it, "what a fine thing it is to be a *young* man! Why now, Mr Mortimer understands as much of all this *etiquette* as you ladies do yourselves; for he only writes a note even to ask how his mother does."

He then put it into Cecilia's hand.

To Dr Lyster.

Tell me, my dear Sir, how you have found my mother? I am uneasy at your long stay, and engaged with my friend Biddulph, or I should have followed you in person. M. D.

"So you see," continued the doctor, "I need not do penance for engaging myself to *you*, when this young gentleman can find such good entertainment for himself."

Cecilia who well knew the honourable motive of Delvile's engagement, with difficulty forbore speaking in his vindication. Dr Lyster immediately began an answer, but before he had finished it, called out, "Now as I am told you are a very good young woman, I think you can do no less than assist me to punish this gay spark, for playing the *macaroni*, when he ought to visit his sick mother."

Cecilia, much hurt for Delvile, and much confused

for herself, looked abashed, but knew not what to answer.

"My scheme," continued the doctor, "is to tell him, that as he has found one engagement for tea, he may find another for supper; but that as to me, I am better disposed of, for you insist upon keeping me to yourself. Come, what says *etiquette?* may I treat myself with this puff?"

"Certainly," said Cecilia, endeavouring to look pleased, "if you will favour us with your company, Miss Charltons and myself will think the *puffing* should rather be ours than yours."

"That, then," said the doctor, "will not answer my purpose, for I mean the puff to be my own, or how do I punish him? So, suppose I tell him I shall not only sup with three young ladies, but be invited to a *tête à tête* with one of them into the bargain?"

The young ladies only laughed, and the doctor finished his note, and sent it away; and then, turning gaily to Cecilia, "Come," he said, "why don't you give me this invitation? surely you don't mean to make me guilty of perjury?"

Cecilia, but little disposed for pleasantry, would gladly now have dropt the subject; but Dr Lyster, turning to the Miss Charltons, said, "Young ladies, I call you both to witness if this is not very bad usage: this young woman has connived at my writing a downright falsehood, and all the time took me in to believe it was a truth. The only way I can think of to cure her of such frolics, is for both of you to leave us together, and so make her keep her word whether she will or no."

The Miss Charltons took the hint, and went away; while Cecilia, who had not at all suspected he meant seriously to speak with her, remained extremely perplexed to think what he had to say.

"Mrs Delvile," cried he, continuing the same air

of easy good humour, "though I allowed her not to speak to me above twenty words, took up near ten of them to tell me that you had behaved to her like an angel. Why so she ought, cried I; what else was she sent for here to look so like one? I charged her, therefore, to take all that as a thing of course; and to prove that I really think what I say, I am now going to make a trial of you, that, if you are any thing less, will induce you to order some of your men to drive me into the street. The truth is, I have had a little commission given me, which in the first place I know not how to introduce, and which, in the second, as far as I can judge, appears to be absolutely superfluous."

Cecilia now felt uneasy and alarmed, and begged him to explain himself. He then dropt the levity with which he had begun the discourse, and after a grave, yet gentle preparation, expressive of his unwillingness to distress her, and his firm persuasion of her uncommon worthiness, he acquainted her that he was no stranger to her situation with respect to the Delvile family.

"Good God!" cried she, blushing and much amazed; "and who"——

"I knew it," said he, "from the moment I attended Mr Mortimer in his illness at Delvile Castle. He could not conceal from me that the seat of his disorder was his mind; and I could not know that, without readily conjecturing the cause, when I saw who was his father's guest, and when I knew what was his father's character. He found he was betrayed to me, and upon my advising a journey, he understood me properly. His openness to counsel, and the manly firmness with which he behaved in quitting you, made me hope the danger was blown over. But last week, when I was at the Castle, where I have for some time attended Mr Delvile, who has had a severe fit of the gout, I found him in an agitation of spirits that made me apprehend it

would be thrown into his stomach. I desired Mrs Delvile to use her influence to calm him; but she was herself in still greater emotion, and acquainting me she was obliged to leave him, desired I would spend with him every moment in my power. I have therefore almost lived at the Castle during her absence, and, in the course of our many conversations, he has acknowledged to me the uneasiness under which he has laboured, from the intelligence concerning his son, which he had just received."

Cecilia wished here to enquire *how* received, and from whom, but had not the courage, and therefore he proceeded.

"I was still with the father when Mr Mortimer arrived post at my house to fetch me hither. I was sent for home; he informed me of his errand without disguise, for he knew I was well acquainted with the original secret whence all the evil arose. I told him my distress in what manner to leave his father; and he was extremely shocked himself when acquainted with his situation. We agreed that it would be vain to conceal from him the indisposition of Mrs Delvile, which the delay of her return, and a thousand other accidents, might in some unfortunate way make known to him. He commissioned me, therefore, to break it to him, that he might consent to my journey, and at the same time to quiet his own mind, by assuring him all he had apprehended was wholly at an end."

He stopt, and looked to see how Cecilia bore these words.

"It *is* all at an end, Sir;" said she, with firmness; "but I have not yet heard your commission; what, and from whom is that?"

"I am thoroughly satisfied it is unnecessary;" he answered, "since the young man can but submit, and you can but give him up."

"But still, if there is a message, it is fit I should hear it."

"If you chuse it, so it is. I told Mr Delvile whither I was coming, and I repeated to him his son's assurances. He was relieved, but not satisfied; he would not see him, and gave me for him a prohibition of extreme severity, —— and to *you* he bid me say——"

"From *him*, then, is my message?" cried Cecilia, half frightened, and much disappointed.

"Yes," said he, understanding her immediately, "for the son, after giving me his first account, had the wisdom and forbearance not once to mention you."

"I am very glad," said she, with a mixture of admiration and regret, "to hear it. But, what, Sir, said Mr Delvile?"

"He bid me tell you that either *he*, or *you* must see his son never more."

"It was indeed unnecessary," cried she, colouring with resentment, "to send me such a message. I meant not to see him again, he meant not to desire it. I return him, however, no answer, and I will make him no promise; to Mrs Delvile alone I hold myself bound; to him, send what messages he may, I shall always hold myself free. But believe me, Dr Lyster, if with his name, his son had inherited his character, his desire of our separation would be feeble, and trifling, compared with my own!"

"I am sorry, my good young lady," said he, "to have given you this disturbance; yet I admire your spirit, and doubt not but it will enable you to forget any little disappointment you may have suffered. And what, after all, have you to regret? Mortimer Delvile is, indeed, a young man that any woman might wish to attach; but every woman cannot have him, and you, of all women, have least reason to repine in missing him,

for scarcely is there another man you may not chuse or reject at your pleasure."

Little as was the consolation Cecilia could draw from this speech, she was sensible it became not her situation to make complaints, and therefore, to end the conversation, she proposed calling in the Miss Charltons.

"No, no," said he, "I must step up again to Mrs Delvile, and then be-gone. To-morrow morning I shall but call to see how she is, and leave some directions, and set off. Mr Mortimer Delvile accompanies me back: but he means to return hither in a week, in order to travel with his mother to Bristol. Mean time, I purpose to bring about a reconciliation between him and his father, whose prejudices are more intractable than any man's I ever met with."

"It will be strange indeed," said Cecilia, "should a reconciliation *now* be difficult!"

"True; but it is long since he was young himself, and the softer affections he never was acquainted with, and only regards them in his son as derogatory to his whole race. However, if there were not some few such men, there would hardly be a family in the kingdom that could count a great grand-father. I am not, I must own, of his humour myself, but I think it rather peculiarly stranger, than peculiarly worse than most other peoples; and how, for example, was that of *your* uncle a whit the better? He was just as fond of *his* name, as if, like Mr Delvile, he could trace it from the time of the Saxons."

Cecilia strongly felt the truth of this observation, but not chusing to discuss it, made not any answer, and Dr Lyster, after a few good-natured apologies, both for his friends the Delviles and himself, went up stairs.

"What continual disturbance," cried she, when left alone, "keeps me thus for-ever from rest! no sooner is one wound closed, but another is opened; mortification

constantly succeeds distress, and when my heart is spared, my pride is attacked, that not a moment of tranquility may ever be allowed me! Had the lowest of women won the affections of Mr Delvile, could his father with less delicacy or less decency have acquainted her with his inflexible disapprobation? To send with so little ceremony a message so contemptuous and so peremptory!—but perhaps it is better, for had he, too, like Mrs Delvile, joined kindness with rejection, I might still more keenly have felt the perverseness of my destiny."

Chapter viij.

A PARTING.

THE next morning Dr Lyster called early, and having visited Mrs Delvile, and again met the two gentlemen of the faculty in whose care she was to remain, he took his leave. But not without contriving first to speak a few words to Cecilia in private, in which he charged her to be careful of her health, and re-animate her spirits. "Don't suppose," said he, "that because I am a friend of the Delvile family, I am either blind to your merits, or to their foibles, far from it; but then why should they interfere with one another? Let them keep their prejudices, which, though different, are not worse than their neighbours, and do you retain your excellencies, and draw from them the happiness they ought to give you. People reason and refine themselves into a thousand miseries, by chusing to settle that they can only be contented one way; whereas, there are fifty ways, if they would but look about them, that would commonly do as well."

"I believe, indeed, you are right," answered Cecilia, "and I thank you for the admonition; I will do what

I can towards studying your scheme of philosophy, and it is always one step to amendment, to be convinced that we want it."

"You are a sensible and charming girl," said Dr Lyster, "and Mr Delvile, should he find a daughter-in-law descended in a right line from Egbert, first king of all England, won't be so well off as if he had satisfied himself with you. However, the old gentleman has a fair right, after all, to be pleased his own way, and let us blame him how we will, we shall find, upon sifting, it is for no other reason but because his humour happens to clash with our own."

"That, indeed," said Cecilia, smiling, "is a truth incontrovertible! and a truth to which, for the future, I will endeavour to give more weight. But will you permit me now to ask one question?—Can you tell me *from whom, how, or when the intelligence which has* caused all this disturbance——"

She hesitated, but, comprehending her readily, he answered "How they got at it, I never heard, for I never thought it worth while to enquire, as it is so generally known, that nobody I meet with seems ignorant of it."

This was another, and a cruel shock to Cecilia, and Dr Lyster, perceiving it, again attempted to comfort her. "That the *affair is somewhat spread," said he, "is* now not to be helped, and therefore little worth thinking of; every body will agree that the choice of both does honour to both, and nobody need be ashamed to be successor to either, whenever the course of things leads Mr Mortimer and yourself to make another election. He wisely intends to go abroad, and will not return till he is his own man again. And as to you, my good young lady, what, after a short time given to vexation, need interrupt your happiness? You have the whole world before you, with youth, fortune,

talents, beauty and independence; drive, therefore, from your head this unlucky affair, and remember there can hardly be a family in the kingdom, this one excepted, that will not rejoice in a connection with you."

He then good-humouredly shook hands with her, and went into his chaise.

Cecilia, though not slow in remarking the ease and philosophy with which every one can argue upon the calamities, and moralize upon the misconduct of others, had still the candour and good sense to see that there was reason in what he urged, and to resolve upon making the best use in her power of the hints for consolation she might draw from his discourse.

During the following week, she devoted herself almost wholly to Mrs Delvile, sharing with the maid, whom she had brought with her from the Castle, the fatigue of nursing her, and leaving to the Miss Charltons the chief care of their grandmother. For Mrs Delvile appeared every hour more sensible of her attention, and more desirous of her presence, and though neither of them spoke, each was endeared to the other by the tender offices of friendship which were paid and received.

When this week was expired, Dr Lyster was prevailed upon to return again to Bury, in order to travel himself with Mrs Delvile to Bristol. "Well," cried he, taking Cecilia by the first opportunity aside, "how are you? Have you studied my scheme of philosophy, as you promised me?"

"O yes," said she, "and made, I flatter myself, no little proficiency."

"You are a good girl," cried he, "a very extraordinary girl! I am sure you are; and upon my honour I pity poor Mortimer with all my soul! But he is a noble young fellow, and behaves with a courage

and spirit that does me good to behold. To have obtained you, he would have moved heaven and earth, but finding you out of his reach, he submits to his fate like a man."

Cecilia's eyes glistened at this speech; "Yes," said she, "he long since said 'tis suspence, 'tis hope, that make the misery of life,—for there the Passions have all power, and Reason has none. But when evils are irremediable, and we have neither resources to plan, nor castle-building to delude us, we find time for the cultivation of philosophy, and flatter ourselves, perhaps, that we have found inclination!"

"Why you have considered this matter very deeply," said he; "but I must not have you give way to these serious reflections. Thought, after all, has a cruel spite against happiness; I would have you, therefore, keep as much as you conveniently can, out of its company. Run about and divert yourself, 'tis all you have for it. The true art of happiness in this most whimsical world, seems nothing more nor less than this—Let those who have leisure, find employment, and those who have business, find leisure."

He then told her that Mr Delvile senior was much better, and no longer confined to his room: and that he had had the pleasure of seeing an entire reconciliation take place between him and his son, of whom he was more fond and more proud than any other father in the universe."

"Think of him, however, my dear young lady," he continued, "no more, for the matter I see is desperate: you must pardon my being a little officious, when I confess to you I could not help proposing to the old gentleman an expedient of my own; for as I could not drive you out of my head, I employed myself in thinking what might be done by way of accommodation. Now my scheme was really a very good one, only when people are

prejudiced, all reasoning is thrown away upon them. I proposed sinking *both* your names, since they are so at variance with one another, and so adopting a third, by means of a title. But Mr Delvile angrily declared, that though such a scheme might do very well for the needy Lord Ernolf, a Peer of twenty years, his own noble ancestors should never, by his consent, forfeit a name which so many centuries had rendered honourable. His son Mortimer, he added, must inevitably inherit the title of his grandfather, his uncle being old and unmarried; but yet he would rather see him a beggar, than lose his dearest hope that *Delvile*, Lord *Delvile*, would descend, both name and title, from generation to generation unsullied and uninterrupted."

"I am sorry, indeed," said Cecilia, "that such a proposal was made, and I earnestly entreat that none of any sort may be repeated."

"Well, well," said he, "I would not for the world do any mischief, but who would not have supposed such a proposal would have done good?"

"Mr Mortimer," he then added, "is to meet us at —— for he would not, he said, come again to this place, upon such terms as he was here last week, for the whole worth of the king's dominions."

The carriage was now ready, and Mrs Delvile was prepared to depart. Cecilia approached to take leave of her, but Dr Lyster following, said "No talking! no thanking! no compliments of any sort! I shall carry off my patient without permitting one civil speech, and for all the rudeness I make her guilty of, I am willing to be responsible."

Cecilia would then have retreated, but Mrs Delvile, holding out both her hands, said "To every thing else, Dr Lyster, I am content to submit; but were I to die while uttering the words, I cannot leave this inestimable creature without first saying how much I love her, how

I honour, and how I thank her! without entreating her to be careful of her health, and conjuring her to compleat the greatness of her conduct, by not suffering her spirits to sink from the exertion of her virtue. And now my love, God bless you!"

She then embraced her, and went on; Cecilia, at a motion of Dr Lyster's, forbearing to follow her.

"And thus," cried she, when they were gone, "thus ends all my connection with this family! which it seems as if I was only to have known for the purpose of affording a new proof of the insufficiency of situation to constitute happiness. Who looks not upon mine as the perfection of human felicity?—— And so, perhaps, it is, for it may be that Felicity and Humanity are never permitted to come nearer."

And thus, in philosophic sadness, by reasoning upon the universality of misery, she restrained, at least, all violence of sorrow, though her spirits were dejected, and her heart was heavy.

But the next day brought with it some comfort that a little lightened her sadness; Mrs Charlton, almost wholly recovered, was able to go down stairs, and Cecilia had at least the satisfaction of seeing an happy conclusion to an illness of which, with the utmost concern and regret, she considered herself as the cause. She attended her with the most unremitting assiduity, and being really very thankful, endeavoured to appear happy, and flattered herself that, by continual effort, the appearance in a short time would become reality.

Mrs Charlton retired early, and Cecilia accompanied her up stairs: and while she was with her, was informed that Mr Monckton was in the parlour.

The various, afflicting, and uncommon scénes in which she had been engaged since she last saw him, had almost wholly driven him from her remembrance, or when at any time he recurred to it, it was only to

attribute the discontinuance of his visits to the offence she had given him, in refusing to follow his advice by relinquishing her London expedition.

Full, therefore, of the mortifying transactions which had passed since their parting, and fearful of his enquiries into disgraces he had nearly foretold, she heard him announced with chagrin, and waited upon him in the most painful confusion.

Far different were the feelings of Mr Monckton; he read in her countenance the dejection of disappointment, which impressed upon his heart the vivacity of hope: her evident shame was to him secret triumph, her ill-concealed sorrow revived all his expectations.

She hastily began a conversation by mentioning her debt to him, and apologising for not paying it the moment she was of age. He knew but too well how her time had been occupied, and assured her the delay was wholly immaterial.

He then led to an enquiry into the present situation of her affairs; but unable to endure a disquisition, which could only be productive of censure and mortification, she hastily stopt it, exclaiming, "Ask me not, I entreat you, Sir, any detail of what has passed,——the event has brought me sufferings that may well make blame be dispensed with;—I acknowledge all your wisdom, I am sensible of my own error, but the affair is wholly dropt, and the unhappy connection I was forming is broken off for-ever!"

Little now was Mr Monckton's effort in repressing his further curiosity, and he started other subjects with readiness, gaiety and address. He mentioned Mrs Charlton, for whom he had not the smallest regard; he talked to her of Mrs Harrel, whose very existence was indifferent to him; and he spoke of their common acquaintance in the country, for not one of whom he would have grieved, if assured of meeting no more.

His powers of conversation were enlivened by his hopes; and his exhilarated spirits made all subjects seem happy to him. A weight was removed from his mind which had nearly borne down even his remotest hopes; the object of his eager pursuit seemed still within his reach, and the rival into whose power he had so lately almost beheld her delivered, was totally renounced, and no longer to be dreaded. A revolution such as this, raised expectations more sanguine than ever; and in quitting the house, he exultingly considered himself released from every obstacle to his views—till, just as he arrived home, he recollected his wife!

———o———

Chapter viij.

A TALE.

A WEEK passed, during which Cecilia, however sad, spent her time as usual with the family, denying to herself all voluntary indulgence of grief, and forbearing to seek consolation from solitude, or relief from tears. She never named Delvile, she begged Mrs Charlton never to mention him; she called to her aid the account she had received from Dr Lyster of his firmness, and endeavoured, by an emulous ambition, to fortify her mind from the weakness of depression and regret.

This week, a week of struggle with all her feelings, was just elapsed, when she received by the post the *following letter from Mrs Delvile.*

To Miss Beverley.

BRISTOL, *Oct.* 21.

My sweet young friend will not, I hope, be sorry to hear of my safe arrival at this place: to me every

account of her health and welfare, will ever be the intelligence I shall most covet to receive. Yet I mean not to ask for it in return; to chance I will trust for information, and I only write now to say I shall write no more.

Too much for thanks is what I owe you, and what I think of you is beyond all power of expression. Do not, then, wish me ill, ill as I have seemed to merit of you, for my own heart is almost broken by the tyranny I have been compelled to practise upon yours.

And now let me bid a long adieu to you, my admirable Cecilia; you shall not be tormented with a useless correspondence, which can only awaken painful recollections, or give rise to yet more painful new anxieties. Fervently will I pray for the restoration of your happiness, to which nothing can so greatly contribute as that wise, that uniform command, so feminine, yet so dignified, you maintain over your passions; which often I have admired, though never so feelingly as at this conscious moment! when my own health is the sacrifice of emotions most fatally unrestrained.

Send to me no answer, even if you have the sweetness to wish it; every new proof of the generosity of your nature is to me but a new wound. Forget us, therefore, wholly,—alas! you have only known us for sorrow!—forget us, dear and invaluable Cecilia! though ever, as you have nobly deserved, must you be fondly and gratefully remembered by

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

The attempted philosophy, and laboured resignation of Cecilia, this letter destroyed: the struggle was over, the apathy was at an end, and she burst into an agony of tears, which finding the vent they had long sought, now flowed unchecked down her cheeks, sad monitors of the weakness of reason opposed to the anguish of sorrow!

A letter at once so caressing, yet so absolute, forced its way to her heart, in spite of the fortitude she had flattered herself was its guard. In giving up Delvile she was satisfied of the propriety of seeing him no more, and convinced that even to talk of him would be folly and imprudence; but to be told that for the future they must remain strangers to the existence of each other—there seemed in this a hardship, a rigour, that was insupportable.

"Oh what," cried she, "is human nature! in its best state how imperfect! that a woman such as this, so noble in character, so elevated in sentiment, with heroism to sacrifice to her sense of duty the happiness of a son, whom with joy she would die to serve, can herself be thus governed by prejudice, thus enslaved, thus subdued by opinion!" Yet never, even when miserable, unjust or irrational; her grief was unmixed with anger, and her tears streamed not from resentment, but affliction. The situation of Mrs Delvile, however different, she considered to be as wretched as her own. She read, therefore, with sadness, but not bitterness, her farewell, and received not with disdain, but with gratitude, her sympathy. Yet though her indignation was not irritated, her sufferings were doubled, by a farewell so kind, yet so despotic, a sympathy so affectionate, yet so hopeless.

In this first indulgence of grief which she had granted to her disappointment, she was soon interrupted by a summons down stairs to a gentleman.

Unfit and unwilling to be seen, she begged that he might leave his name, and appoint a time for calling again.

Her maid brought for answer, that he believed his name was unknown to her, and desired to see her now, unless she was employed in some matter of moment.

She then put up her letter, and went into the parlour;

and there, to her infinite amazement, beheld Mr Albany.

"How little, Sir," she cried, "did I expect this pleasure."

"This pleasure," repeated he, "do you call it?—what strange abuse of words! what causeless trifling with honesty! is language of no purpose but to wound the ear with untruths? is the gift of speech only granted us to pervert the use of understanding? I can give you no pleasure, I have no power to give it any one; you can give none to me—the whole world could not invest you with the means!"

"Well, Sir," said Cecilia, who had little spirit to defend herself, "I will not vindicate the expression, but of this I will unfeignedly assure you, I am at least as glad to see you just now, as I should be to see anybody."

"Your eyes," cried he, "are red, your voice is inarticulate;—young, rich, and attractive, the world at your feet; that world yet untried, and its falsehood unknown, how have you thus found means to anticipate misery? which way have you uncovered the cauldron of human woes? Fatal and early anticipation! that cover once removed, can never be replaced; those woes, those boiling woes, will pour out upon you continually, and only when your heart ceases to beat, will their ebullition cease to torture you!"

"Alas!" cried Cecilia, shuddering, "how cruel, yet how true!"

"Why went you," cried he, "to the cauldron? it came not to you. Misery seeks not man, but man misery. He walks out in the sun, but stops not for a cloud; confident, he pursues his way, till the storm which, gathering, he might have avoided, bursts over his devoted head. Scared and amazed, he repents his temerity; he calls, but it is then too late; he runs, but it is thunder which follows him! Such is the pre-

sumption of man, such at once is the arrogance and shallowness of his nature! And thou, simple and blind! hast thou, too, followed whither Fancy has led thee, unheeding that thy career was too vehement for tranquility, nor missing that lovely companion of youth's early innocence, till, adventurous and unthinking, thou hast lost her for ever!"

In the present weak state of Cecilia's spirits, this attack was too much for her; and the tears she had just, and with difficulty restrained, again forced their way down her cheeks, as she answered, "It is but too true,—I have lost her for ever!"

"Poor thing," said he, while the rigour of his countenance was softened into the gentlest commiseration, "so young!—looking, too, so innocent!—'tis hard!—And is nothing left thee? no small remaining hope, to cheat, humanely cheat thy yet not wholly extinguished credulity?"

Cecilia wept without answering.

"Let me not," said he, "waste my compassion upon nothing; compassion is with me no effusion of affectation; tell me, then, if thou deservest it, or if thy misfortunes are imaginary, and thy grief is factitious?"

"Factitious," repeated she, "Good heaven!"

"Answer me, then, these questions, in which I shall comprise the only calamities for which sorrow has no controul, or none from human motives. Tell me, then, have you lost by death the friend of your bosom?"

"No!"

"Is your fortune dissipated by extravagance, and your power of relieving the distressed at an end?"

"No; the power and the will are I hope equally undiminished."

"O then, unhappy girl! have you been guilty of some vice, and hangs remorse thus heavy on your conscience?"

"No, no; thank heaven, to that misery, at least, I am a stranger!"

His countenance now again resumed its severity, and, in the sternest manner, "Whence then," he said, "these tears? and what is this caprice you dignify with the name of sorrow?—strange wantonness of indolence and luxury! perverse repining of ungrateful plenitude!—oh *hadst thou known what I have suffered!*"—

"Could I lessen what you have suffered," said Cecilia, "I should sincerely rejoice; but heavy indeed must be your affliction, if mine in its comparison deserves to be styled caprice!"

"Caprice!" repeated he, "'tis joy! 'tis extacy compared with mine!—Thou hast not in licentiousness wasted thy inheritance! thou hast not by remorse barred each avenue to enjoyment! nor yet has the cold grave seized the beloved of thy soul!"

"Neither," said Cecilia, "I hope, are the evils you have yourself sustained so irremediable?"

"Yes, I have borne them all!—*have* borne? I bear them still; I shall bear them while I breathe! I may rue them, perhaps, yet longer."

"Good God!" cried Cecilia, shrinking, "what a world is this! how full of woe and wickedness!"

"Yet thou, too, canst complain," cried he, "though happy in life's only blessing, Innocence! thou, too, canst murmur, though stranger to death's only terror, Sin! Oh yet if thy sorrow is unpolluted with guilt, be regardless of all else, and rejoice in thy destiny!"

"But who," cried she, deeply sighing, "shall teach me such a lesson of joy, when all within rises to oppose it?"

"I," cried he, "will teach it thee, for I will tell thee my own sad story. Then wilt thou find how much happier is thy lot, then wilt thou raise thy head in thankful triumph."

"O no! triumph comes not so lightly! yet if you will venture to trust me with some account of yourself, I shall be glad to hear it, and much obliged by the communication."

"I will," he answered, "whatever I may suffer: to awaken thee from this dream of fancied sorrow, I will open all my wounds, and thou shalt probe them with fresh shame."

"No, indeed," cried Cecilia with quickness, "I will not hear you, if the relation will be so painful."

"Upon *me* this humanity is lost," said he, "since punishment and penitence alone give me comfort. I will tell thee, therefore, my crimes, that thou mayst know thy own felicity, lest, ignorant it means nothing but innocence, thou shouldst lose it, unconscious of its value. Listen then to me, and learn what Misery is! Guilt is alone the basis of lasting unhappiness;—Guilt is the basis of mine, and therefore I am a wretch for ever!"

Cecilia would again have declined hearing him, but he refused to be spared: and as her curiosity had long been excited to know something of his history, and the motives of his extraordinary conduct, she was glad to have it satisfied, and gave him the utmost attention.

"I will not speak to you of my family," said he; "historical accuracy would little answer to either of us. I am a native of the West Indies, and I was early sent hither to be educated. While I was yet at the University, I saw, I adored, and I pursued the fairest flower that ever put forth its sweet buds, the softest heart that ever was broken by ill-usage! She was poor and unprotected, the daughter of a villager; she was untaught and unpretending, the child of simplicity! But fifteen summers had she bloomed, and her heart was an easy conquest; yet, once made mine, it resisted all allurement to infidelity. My fellow students attacked her;

she was assaulted by all the arts of seduction; flattery, bribery, supplication, all were employed, yet all failed; she was wholly my own; and with sincerity so attractive, I determined to marry her in defiance of all worldly objections.

"The sudden death of my father called me hastily to Jamaica; I feared leaving this treasure unguarded, yet in decency could neither marry nor take her directly; I pledged my faith, therefore, to return to her, as soon as I had settled my affairs, and I left to a bosom friend the inspection of her conduct in my absence.

"To leave her was madness,—to trust in man was madness,—Oh hateful race! how has the world been abhorrent to me since that time! I have loathed the light of the sun, I have shrunk from the commerce of my fellow creatures; the voice of man I have detested, his sight I have abominated!—but oh, more than all should I be abominated myself!

"When I came to my fortune, intoxicated with sudden power, I forgot this fair blossom, I revelled in licentiousness and vice, and left it exposed and forlorn. Riot succeeded riot, till a fever, incurred by my own intemperance, first gave me time to think. Then was she revenged, for then first remorse was my portion: her image was brought back to my mind with frantic fondness, and bitterest contrition. The moment I recovered, I returned to England; I flew to claim her, —but she was lost! no one knew whither she was gone; the wretch I had trusted pretended to know least of all; yet, after a furious search, I traced her to a cottage, where he had concealed her himself!

"When she saw me, she screamed and would have flown; I stopt her, and told her I came faithfully and honourably to make her my wife:—her own faith and honour, though sullied, were not extinguished, for she instantly acknowledged the fatal tale of her undoing!

"Did I recompense this ingenuousness? this unexampled, this beautiful sacrifice to intuitive integrity? Yes! with my curses!—I loaded her with execrations, I reviled *her in language the most opprobrious*, I *insulted* her even for her confession! I invoked all evil upon her from the bottom of my heart!—She knelt at my feet, she implored my forgiveness and compassion, she wept with the bitterness of despair,——and yet I spurned *her from me!—Spurned?—let me not hide my shame!* I barbarously struck her!——nor single was the blow! —it was doubled, it was reiterated!—Oh wretch, unyielding and unpitying! where shall hereafter be clemency for thee!—So fair a form! so young a culprit! so infamously seduced! so humbly penitent!

"In this miserable condition, helpless and deplorable, mangled by these savage hands, and reviled by this inhuman tongue, I *left her*, in search of the villain who had destroyed her: but, cowardly as treacherous, he had absconded. Repenting my fury, I hastened to her again; the fierceness of my cruelty shamed me when I grew calmer, the softness of her sorrow melted me upon recollection: I returned, therefore, to soothe her,—but again she was gone! terrified with expectation of insult, she hid herself from all my enquiries. I wandered in search of her two long years to no purpose, regardless of my affairs, and of all things but that pursuit. At length, *I thought I saw her—in London, alone, and walking* in the streets at midnight,——I fearfully followed her, —and followed her into an house of infamy!

"The wretches by whom she was surrounded were noisy and drinking, they heeded me little,——but she *saw and knew me at once! She did not speak, nor* did I,—but in two moments she fainted and fell.

"Yet did I not help her; the people took their own measures to recover her, and when she was again able to stand, would have removed her to another apartment.

"I then went forward, and forcing them away from her with all the strength of desperation, I turned to the unhappy sinner, who to chance only seemed to leave what became of her, and cried, From this scene of vice and horror let me yet rescue you! you look still unfit for such society, trust yourself, therefore, to me. I seized her hand, I drew, I almost dragged her away. She trembled, she could scarce totter, but neither consented nor refused, neither shed a tear, nor spoke a word, and her countenance presented a picture of affright, amazement, and horror.

"I took her to a house in the country, each of us silent the whole way. I gave her an apartment and a female attendant, and ordered for her every convenience I could suggest. I stayed myself in the same house, but distracted with remorse for the guilt and ruin into which I had terrified her, I could not bear her sight.

"In a few days her maid assured me the life she led must destroy her; that she would taste nothing but bread and water, never spoke, and never slept.

"Alarmed by this account, I flew into her apartment; pride and resentment gave way to pity and fondness, and I besought her to take comfort. I spoke, however, to a statue, she replied not, nor seemed to hear me. I then humbled myself to her as in the days of her innocence and first power, supplicating her notice, entreating even her commiseration! all was to no purpose; she neither received nor repulsed me, and was alike inattentive to exhortation and to prayer.

"Whole hours did I spend at her feet, vowing never to arise till she spoke to me,—all, all, in vain! she seemed deaf, mute, insensible; her face unmoved, a settled despair fixed in her eyes,—those eyes that had never looked at me but with dove-like softness and compliance!—She sat constantly in one chair, she never changed her dress, no persuasions could prevail with her

to lie down, and at meals she just swallowed so much dry bread as might save her from dying for want of food.

"What was the distraction of my soul, to find her bent upon this course to her last hour!——quick came that hour, but never will it be forgotten! rapidly it was gone, but eternally it will be remembered!

"When she felt herself expiring, she acknowledged she had made a vow, upon entering the house, to live speechless and motionless, as a pennance for her offences!

"I kept her loved corpse till my own senses failed me,—it was then only torn from me,—and I have lost all recollection of three years of my existence!"

Cecilia shuddered at this hint, yet was not surprised by it; Mr Gosport had acquainted her he had been formerly confined; and his flightiness, wildness, florid language, and extraordinary way of life, had long led her to suspect his reason had been impaired.

"The scene to which my memory first leads me back," he continued, "is visiting her grave; solemnly upon it I returned her vow, though not by one of equal severity. To her poor remains did I pledge myself, that the day should never pass in which I would receive nourishment, nor the night come in which I would take rest, till I had done, or zealously attempted to do, some service to a fellow-creature.

"For this purpose have I wandered from city to city, from the town to the country, and from the rich to the poor. I go into every house where I can gain admittance, I admonish all who will hear me, I shame even those who will not. I seek the distressed wherever they are hid, I follow the prosperous to beg a mite to serve them. I look for the Dissipated in public, where, amidst their licentiousness, I check them; I pursue the Unhappy in private, where I counsel and endeavour to

assist them. My own power is small; my relations, during my sufferings, limiting me to an annuity; but there is no one I scruple to solicit, and by zeal I supply *ability*.

"Oh life of hardship and pennance! laborious, toilsome, and restless! but I have merited no better, and I will not repine at it; I have vowed that I will endure it, and I will not be forsworn.

"One indulgence alone from time to time I allow myself,—'tis Music! which has power to delight me *even to rapture! it quiets all anxiety, it carries me out* of myself, I forget through it every calamity, even the bitterest anguish.

"Now then, that thou hast heard me, tell me, hast *thou* cause of sorrow?"

"Alas," cried Cecilia, "this indeed is a Picture of Misery to make *my* lot seem all happiness!"

"*Art thou thus open to conviction?*" *cried he*, mildly; "and dost thou not fly the voice of truth! for truth and reproof are one."

"No, I would rather seek it; I feel myself wretched, however inadequate may be the cause; I wish to be more resigned, and if you can instruct me how, I shall thankfully attend to you."

"*Oh yet uncorrupted creature!*" *cried he*, "*with* joy will I be thy monitor,—joy long untasted! Many have I wished to serve, all, hitherto, have rejected my offices; too honest to flatter them, they had not the fortitude to listen to me; too low to advance them, they had not the virtue to bear with me. You alone have I yet found pure enough not to fear inspection, *and good enough to wish to be better. Yet words* alone will not content me; I must also have deeds. Nor will your purse, however readily opened, suffice, you must give to me also your time and your thoughts; for money sent by others, to others only will afford

relief; to enlighten your own cares, you must distribute it yourself."

"You shall find me," said she, "a docile pupil, and most glad to be instructed how my existence may be useful."

"Happy then," cried he, "was the hour that brought me to this country; yet not in search of you did I come, but of the mutable and ill-fated Belfield. Erring, yet ingenious young man! what a lesson to the vanity of talents, to the gaiety, the brilliancy of wit, is the sight of that green fallen plant! not sapless by age, nor withered by disease, but destroyed by want of pruning, and bending, breaking by its own luxuriance!"

"And where, Sir, is he now?"

"Laboring wilfully in the field, with those who labour compulsatorily; such are we all by nature, discontented, perverse, and changeable; though all have not courage to appear so, and few, like Belfield, are worth watching when they do. He told me he was happy; I knew it could not be: but his employment was inoffensive, and I left him without reproach. In this neighbourhood I heard of you, and found your name was coupled with praise. I came to see if you deserved it; I have seen, and am satisfied."

"You are not, then, very difficult, for I have yet done nothing. How are we to begin these operations you propose? You have awakened me by them to an expectation of pleasure, which nothing else, I believe, could just now have given me."

"We will work," cried he, "together, till not a woe shall remain upon your mind. The blessings of the fatherless, the prayers of little children, shall heal all your wounds with balm of sweetest fragrance. When sad, they shall cheer, when complaining, they shall soothe you. We will go to their roofless houses, and see them repaired; we will exclude from their

dwellings the inclemency of the weather; we will clothe them from cold, we will rescue them from hunger. The cries of distress shall be changed to notes of joy: your heart shall be enraptured, mine, too, shall revive—oh whither am I wandering? I am painting an Elysium! and while I idly speak, some fainting object dies for want of succour! Farewell; I will fly to the abodes of wretchedness, and come to you to-morrow to render them the abodes of happiness."

He then went away.

This singular visit was for Cecilia most fortunately timed: it almost surprised her out of her peculiar grief, by the view which it opened to her of general calamity; wild, flighty, and imaginative as were his language and his counsels, their morality was striking, and their benevolence was affecting. Taught by him to compare her state with that of at least half her species, she began more candidly to weigh what was left with what was withdrawn, and found the balance in her favour. The plan he had presented to her of good works was consonant to her character and inclinations; and the active charity in which he proposed to engage her, re-animated her fallen hopes, though to far different subjects from those which had depressed them. Any scheme of worldly happiness would have sickened and disgusted her; but her mind was just in the situation to be impressed with elevated piety, and to adopt any design in which virtue humoured melancholy.

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Chapter IX.

A SHOCK.

CECILIA passed the rest of the day in fanciful projects of beneficence; she determined to wander with her romantic new ally whither-soever he would lead her, and to spare neither fortune, *time, nor trouble, in seeking and relieving the distressed.* Not all her attempted philosophy had calmed her mind like this plan; in merely refusing indulgence to grief, she had only locked it up in her heart, where eternally struggling for vent, she was almost overpowered by restraining it; but now her affliction had no longer her whole faculties to itself; the hope of doing good, the pleasure of easing pain, the intention of devoting her time to the service of the unhappy, once more delighted her imagination,—*that source of promissory enjoyment,* which though often obstructed, is never, in youth, exhausted.

She would not give Mrs Charlton the unnecessary pain of hearing the letter with which she had been so much affected, but she told her of the visit of Albany, and pleased her with the account of their scheme.

At night, with less sadness than usual, she retired to rest. In her sleep she bestowed riches, and poured *plenty upon the land; she humbled the oppressor, she* exalted the oppressed; slaves were raised to dignities, captives restored to liberty; beggars saw smiling abundance, and wretchedness was banished the world. From a cloud in which she was supported by angels, Cecilia beheld these wonders, and while enjoying the glorious illusion, she was awakened by her maid, with news that Mrs Charlton was dying!

She started up, and, undressed, was running to her apartment,—*when the maid, calling to stop her,* confessed she was already dead!

She had made her exit in the night, but the time was not exactly known; her own maid, who slept in the room with her, going early to her bedside to enquire how she did, found her cold and motionless, and could only conclude that a paralytic stroke had taken her off.

Happily and in good time had Cecilia been somewhat recruited by one night of refreshing slumbers and flattering dreams, for the shock she now received promised her not soon another.

She lost in Mrs Charlton a friend, whom nearly from her infancy she had considered as a mother, and by whom she had been cherished with tenderness almost unequalled. She was not a woman of bright parts, or much cultivation, but her heart was excellent, and her disposition was amiable. Cecilia had known her longer than her memory could look back, though the earliest circumstances she could trace were kindnesses received from her. Since she had entered into life, and found the difficulty of the part she had to act, to this worthy old lady alone had she unbosomed her secret cares. Though little assisted by her counsel, she was always certain of her sympathy; and while her own superior judgment directed her conduct, she had the relief of communicating her schemes, and weighing her perplexities, with a friend to whom nothing that concerned her was indifferent, and whose greatest wish and chief pleasure was the enjoyment of her conversation.

If left to herself, in the present period of her life, Mrs Charlton had certainly not been the friend of her choice. The delicacy of her mind, and the refinement of her ideas, had now rendered her fastidious, and she would have looked out for elegancies and talents to which Mrs Charlton had no pretensions; but those who live in the country have little power of selection; confined to a small circle, they must be content with what it offers; and however they may idolize extraordinary

merit when they meet with it, they must not regard it as essential to friendship, for in their circumscribed rotation, whatever may be their discontent, they can make but little change.

Such had been the situation to which Mrs Charlton and Mrs Harrel owed the friendship of Cecilia. Greatly their superior in understanding and intelligence, had the candidates for her favour been more numerous, the election had not fallen upon either of them. But she became known to both before discrimination made her difficult, and when her enlightened mind discerned their deficiencies, they had already an interest in her affections, which made her see them with lenity: and though sometimes, perhaps, conscious she should not have chosen them from many, she adhered to them with sincerity, and would have changed them for none.

Mrs Harrel, however, too weak for similar sentiments, forgot her when out of sight, and by the time they met again, was insensible to everything but shew and dissipation. Cecilia, shocked and surprised, first grieved from disappointed affection, and then lost that affection in angry contempt. But her fondness for Mrs Charlton had never known abatement, as the kindness which had excited it had never known allay. She had loved her first from childish gratitude; but that love, strengthened and confirmed by confidential intercourse, was now as sincere and affectionate as if it had originated from sympathetic admiration. Her loss, therefore, was felt with the utmost severity, and neither seeing nor knowing any means of replacing it, she considered it as irreparable, and mourned it with bitterness.

When the first surprize of this cruel stroke was somewhat lessened, she sent an express to Mr Monckton with the news, and entreated to see him immediately. He came without delay, and she begged his counsel what step she ought herself to take in consequence of

this event. Her own house was still unprepared for her; she had of late neglected to hasten the workmen, and almost forgotten her intention of entering it. It was necessary, however, to change her abode immediately; she was no longer in the house of Mrs Charlton, but of her grand-daughters and co-heiresses, each of whom she disliked, and upon neither of whom she had any claim.

Mr Monckton then, with the quickness of a man who utters a thought at the very moment of its projection, mentioned a scheme upon which during his whole ride he had been ruminating; which was that she would instantly remove to his house, and remain there till settled to her satisfaction.

Cecilia objected her little right of surprising Lady Margaret; but, without waiting to discuss it, lest new objections should arise, he quitted her, to fetch himself from her ladyship an invitation he meant to insist upon her sending.

Cecilia, though heartily disliking this plan, knew not at present what better to adopt, and thought anything preferable to going again to Mrs Harrel, since that only could be done by feeding the anxiety of Mr Arnott.

Mr Monckton soon returned with a message of his own fabrication; for his lady, though obliged to receive whom he pleased, took care to guard inviolate the independence of speech, sullenly persevering in refusing to say anything, or perversely saying only what he least wished to hear.

Cecilia then took a hasty leave of Miss Charltons, who, little affected by what they had lost, and eager to examine what they had gained, parted from her gladly, and, with a heavy heart and weeping eyes, borrowed for the last time the carriage of her late worthy old friend, and for-ever quitting her hospitable house, sorrowfully set out for the Grove.

BOOK IX.

Chapter j.

A COGITATION.

LADY MARGARET MONCKTON *received* Cecilia with the most gloomy coldness: she apologised for the liberty she had taken in making use of her ladyship's house, but, meeting no return of civility, she withdrew to the room which had been prepared for her, and resolved as much as possible to keep out of her sight.

It now became necessary without further delay to settle her plan of life, and fix her place of residence. The forbidding looks of Lady Margaret made her hasten her resolves, which otherwise would for a while have given way to grief for her recent misfortune.

She sent for the surveyor who had the superintendance of her estates, to enquire how soon her own house would be fit for her reception; and heard there was yet work for near two months.

This answer made her very uncomfortable. To continue two months under the roof with Lady Margaret was a penance she could not enjoin herself, nor was she at all sure Lady Margaret would submit to it any better: she determined, therefore, to release herself from the conscious burthen of being an unwelcome visitor, by boarding with some creditable family at Bury, and devoting the two months in which she was

to be kept from her house, to a general arrangement of her affairs, and a final settling with her guardians.

For these purposes it would be necessary she should go to London: but with whom, or in what manner, she could not decide. She desired, therefore, another conference with Mr Monckton, who met her in the parlour.

She then communicated to him her schemes; and begged his counsel in her perplexities.

He was delighted at the application, and extremely well pleased with her design of boarding at Bury, well knowing, he could then watch and visit her at his pleasure, and have far more comfort in her society than even in his own house, where all the vigilance with which he observed her, was short of that with which he was himself observed by Lady Margaret. He endeavoured, however, to dissuade her from going to town, but her eagerness to pay the large sum she owed him, was now too great to be conquered. Of age, her fortune wholly in her power, and all attendance upon Mrs Charlton at an end, she had no longer any excuse for having a debt in the world, and would suffer no persuasion to make her begin her career in life, with a negligence in settling her accounts which she had so often censured in others. To go to London therefore she was fixed, and all that she desired was his advice concerning the journey.

He then told her that in order to settle with her guardians, she must write to them in form, to demand an account of the sums that had been expended during her minority, and announce her intention for the future to take the management of her fortune into her own hands.

She immediately followed his directions, and consented to remain at the Grove till their answers arrived.

Being now, therefore, unavoidably fixed for some time at the house, she thought it proper and decent to

attempt softening Lady Margaret in her favour. She exerted all her powers to please and to oblige her; but the exertion was necessarily vain, not only from the disposition, but the situation of her ladyship, since every effort made for this conciliatory purpose, rendered her doubly amiable in the eyes of her husband, and consequently to herself more odious than ever. Her jealousy, already but too well founded, received every hour the poisonous nourishment of fresh conviction, which so much soured and exasperated a temper naturally harsh, that her malignity and ill-humour grew daily more acrimonious. Nor would she have contented herself with displaying this irascibility by general moroseness, *had not the same suspicious watchfulness which* discovered to her the passion of her husband, served equally to make manifest the indifference and innocence of Cecilia; to reproach her therefore, she had not any pretence, though her knowledge how much she had to dread her, past current in her mind for sufficient reason to hate her. The Angry and the Violent use little discrimination; whom they like, they enquire not if they approve; but whoever, no matter how unwittingly, stands in their way, they scruple not to ill use, and conclude they may laudably detest.

Cecilia, though much disgusted, gave not over her attempt, which she considered but as her due while she continued in her house. Her general character, also, for peevishness and haughty ill-breeding, skilfully, from time to time, displayed, and artfully repined at by Mr Monckton, still kept her from suspecting any peculiar animosity to herself, and made her impute all that passed to the mere rancour of ill-humour. She confined herself, however, as much as possible to her own apartment, where her sorrow for Mrs Charlton almost hourly increased, by the comparison she was forced upon making of her house with the Grove.

That worthy old lady left her grand-daughters her co-heiresses and sole executrixes. She bequeathed from them nothing considerable, though she left some donations for the poor, and several of her friends were remembered by small legacies. Among them Cecilia had her picture, and favourite trinkets, with a paragraph in her will, that as there was no one she so much loved, had her fortune been less splendid, she should have shared with her grand-daughters whatever she had to bestow.

Cecilia was much affected by this last and solemn remembrance. She more than ever coveted to be alone, that she might grieve undisturbed, and she lamented without ceasing the fatigue and the illness which, in so late a period, as it proved, of her life, she had herself been the means of occasioning to her.

Mr Monckton had too much prudence to interrupt this desire of solitude, which indeed cost him little pain, as he considered her least in danger when alone. She received in about a week answers from both her guardians. Mr Delvile's letter was closely to the purpose, without a word but of business, and couched in the haughtiest terms. As he had never, he said, acted, he had no accounts to send in; but as he was going to town in a few days, he would see her for a moment in the presence of Mr Briggs, that a joint release might be signed, to prevent any future application to him.

Cecilia much lamented there was any necessity for her seeing him at all, and looked forward to the interview as the greatest mortification she could suffer.

Mr Briggs, though still more concise, was far kinder in his language: but he advised her to defer her scheme of taking the money into her own hands, assuring her she would be cheated, and had better leave it to him.

When she communicated these epistles to Mr Monckton, he failed not to read, with an emphasis, by

which his arrogant meaning was still more arrogantly enforced, the letter of Mr Delvile aloud. Nor was he sparing in comments that might render it yet more offensive. *Cecilia neither concurred in what he said*, nor opposed it, but contented herself, when he was silent, with producing the other letter.

Mr Monckton read not this with more favour. He openly attacked the character of Briggs, as covetous, rapacious, and over-reaching, and warned her by no means to abide by his counsel, without first taking the opinion of some disinterested person. He then stated the various arts which might be practised upon her inexperience, enumerated the dangers to which her ignorance of business exposed her, and annotated upon *the cheats, double dealings, and tricks of stock jobbing*, to which he assured her Mr Briggs owed all he was worth, till, perplexed and confounded, she declared herself at a loss how to proceed, and earnestly regretted that she could not have his counsel upon the spot.

This was his aim: to draw the wish from her, drew all suspicion of selfish views from himself: and he told her that he considered her present situation as so critical, the future confusion or regularity of her money transactions seeming to depend upon it, that he would endeavour to arrange his affairs for meeting her in *London*.

Cecilia gave him many thanks for the kind intention, and determined to be totally guided by him in the disposal and direction of her fortune.

Mean time he had now another part to act; he saw that with Cecilia nothing more remained to be done, and that, harbouring not a doubt of his motives, she thought his design in her favour did her nothing but honour; but he had too much knowledge of the world to believe it would judge him in the same manner, and too much consciousness of duplicity to set its judgment at defiance.

To parry, therefore, the conjectures which might follow his attending her, he had already prepared Lady Margaret to wish herself of the party: for however disagreeable to him was her presence and her company, he had no other means to be under the same roof with Cecilia.

Miss Bennet, the wretched tool of his various schemes, and the mean sycophant of his lady, had been employed by him to work upon her jealousy, by secretly informing her of his intention to go to town, at the same time that Cecilia went thither to meet her guardians. She pretended to have learned this intelligence by accident, and to communicate it from respectful regard; and advised her to go to London herself at the same time, that she might see into his designs, and be some check upon his pleasure.

The encreasing infirmities of Lady Margaret made this counsel by no means palatable: but Miss Bennet, following the artful instructions which she received, put in her way so strong a motive, by assuring her how little her company was wished, that in the madness of her spite she determined upon the journey. And little heeding how she tormented herself while she had any view of tormenting Mr Monckton, she was led on by her false confident to invite Cecilia to her own house.

Mr Monckton, in whom by long practice, artifice was almost nature, well knowing his wife's perverseness, affected to look much disconcerted at the proposal; while Cecilia, by no means thinking it necessary to extend her compliance to such a punishment, instantly made an apology, and declined the invitation.

Lady Margaret, little versed in civility, and unused to the arts of persuasion, could not, even for a favourite project, prevail upon herself to use entreaty, and therefore, thinking her scheme defeated, looked gloomily disappointed, and said nothing more.

Mr Monckton saw with delight how much this difficulty inflamed her, though the moment he could speak alone with Cecilia he made it his care to remove it.

He represented to her that, however privately she might live, she was too young to be in London lodgings by herself, and gave an hint which she could not but understand, that in going or in staying with only servants, suspicions might soon be raised, that the plan and motive of her journey were different to those given out.

She knew he meant to insinuate that it would be conjectured she designed to meet Delvile, and though colouring, vexed and provoked at the suggestion, the idea was sufficient to frighten her into his plan.

In a few days, therefore, the matter was wholly arranged, Mr Monckton, by his skill and address, leading every one whither he pleased, while, by the artful coolness of his manner, he appeared but to follow himself. He [set] out the day before, though earnestly wishing to accompany them, but having as yet in no single instance gone to town in the same carriage with Lady Margaret, he dared trust neither the neighbourhood nor the servants with so dangerous a subject for their comments.

Cecilia, compelled thus to travel with only her Ladyship and Miss Bennet, had a journey the most disagreeable, and determined, if possible, to stay in London but two days. She had already fixed upon a house in which she could board at Bury when she returned, and there she meant quietly to reside till she could enter her own.

Lady Margaret herself, exhilarated by a notion of having outwitted her husband, was in unusual good spirits, and almost in good humour. The idea of thwarting his designs, and being in the way of his

entertainment, gave to her a delight she had seldom received from any thing; and the belief that this was effected by the superiority of her cunning, doubled her contentment, and raised it to exultation. She owed him, indeed, much provocation and uneasiness, and was happy in this opportunity of paying her arrears.

Mean while that consummate master in every species of hypocrisy, indulged her in this notion, by the air of dissatisfaction with which he left the house. It was not that she meant by her presence to obviate any impropriety: early and long acquainted with the character of Cecilia, she well knew, that during her life the passion of her husband must be confined to his own breast: but conscious of his aversion to herself, which she resented with the bitterest ill-will, and knowing how little, at any time, he desired her company, she consoled herself for her inability to give pleasure by the power she possessed of giving pain, and bore with the fatigue of a journey disagreeable and inconvenient to her, with no other view than the hope of breaking into his plan of avoiding her. Little imagining that the whole time she was forwarding his favourite pursuit, and only acting the part which he had appointed her to perform.

Chapter ij.

A SURPRIZE.

LADY Margaret's town house was in Soho Square; and scarcely had Cecilia entered it, before her desire to speed her departure, made her send a note to each of her guardians, acquainting them of her arrival, and begging, if possible, to see them the next day.

She had soon the two following answers:

To Miss Cecilia Beverley,—These :

November 8, 1779.

Miss,—

Received yours of the same date; can't come to-morrow. Will, Wednesday the 10th.—Am, &c.,

JNO. BRIGGS.

Miss Cecilia Beverley.

To Miss Beverley.

Mr Delvile has too many affairs of importance upon his hands, to make any appointment till he has deliberated how to arrange them. Mr Delvile will acquaint Miss Beverley when it shall be in his power to see her.

St James's-square, *Nov* 8.

These characteristic letters, which at another time might have diverted Cecilia, now merely served to torment her. She was eager to quit town, she was more eager to have her meeting with Mr Delvile over, who, oppressive to her even when he meant to be kind, she foresaw, now he was in wrath, would be imperious even to rudeness. Desirous, however, to make one interview suffice for both, and to settle whatever business might remain unfinished by letters, she again wrote to Mr Briggs, whom she had not spirits to encounter without absolute necessity, and informing him of Mr Delvile's delay, begged he would not trouble himself to call till he heard from her again.

Two days passed without any message from them; they were spent chiefly alone, and very uncomfortably, Mr Monckton being content to see little of her, while he knew she saw nothing of any body else. On the third morning, weary of her own thoughts, weary of Lady Margaret's ill-humoured looks, and still more

weary of Miss Bennet's parasitical conversation, she determined, for a little relief to the heaviness of her mind, to go to her bookseller, and look over and order into the country such new publications as seemed to promise her any pleasure.

She sent therefore, for a chair, and glad to have devised for herself any amusement, set out in it immediately.

Upon entering the shop, she saw the Bookseller engaged in close conference with a man meanly dressed, and much muffled up, who seemed talking to him with uncommon earnestness, and just as she was approaching, said, "To terms I am indifferent, for writing is no labour to me; on the contrary, it is the first delight of my life, and therefore, and not for dirty pelf, I wish to make it my profession."

The speech struck Cecilia, but the voice struck her more, it was Belfield's! and her amazement was so great, that she stopt short to look at him, without *heeding a man who attended her, and desired to know* her commands.

The bookseller now perceiving her, came forward, and Belfield, turning to see who interrupted them, started as if a spectre had crossed his eyes, slapped his hat over his face, and hastily went out of the shop.

Cecilia checking her inclination to speak to him, from observing his eagerness to escape her, soon recollected her own errand, and employed herself in looking over new books.

Her surprize, however, at a change so sudden in the condition of this young man, and at a declaration of a passion for writing, so opposite to all the sentiments which he had professed at their late meeting in the cottage, awakened in her a strong curiosity to be informed of his situation; and after putting aside some books which she desired to have packed up for her, she

asked if the gentleman who had just left the shop, and who, she found by what he had said, was an Author, had written anything that was published with his name?

"No, ma'am," answered the Bookseller, "nothing of any consequence; he is known, however, to have written several things that have appeared as anonymous; and I fancy, now, soon, we shall see something considerable from him."

"He is about some great work, then?"

"Why no, not exactly that, perhaps, at present; we must feel our way, with some little smart *jeu d'esprit* before we undertake a great work. But he is a very great genius, and I doubt not will produce something extraordinary."

"Whatever he produces," said Cecilia, "as I have now chanced to see him, I shall be glad you will, at any time, send to me."

"Certainly, ma'am; but it must be among other things, for he does not chuse, just now to be known: and it is a rule in our business never to tell people's names when they desire to be secret. He is a little out of cash, just now, as you may suppose by his appearance, so instead of buying books, he comes to sell them. However, he has taken a very good road to bring himself home again, for we pay very handsomely for things of any merit, especially if they deal smartly in a few touches of the times."

Cecilia chose not to risk any further questions, lest her knowledge of him should be suspected, but got into her chair, and returned to Lady Margaret's.

The sight of Belfield reminded her not only of himself; the gentle Henrietta again took her place in her memory, whence her various distresses and suspences had of late driven from it everybody but Delvile, and those whom Delvile brought into it. But her regard

for that amiable girl, though sunk in the busy scenes of her calamitous uncertainties, was only sunk in her own bosom, and ready, upon their removal, to revive with fresh vigour. She was now indeed more unhappy than even in the period of her forgetfulness, yet her mind was no longer filled with the restless turbulence of hope, which still more than despondency unfitted it *for thinking of others.*

This remembrance thus awakened, awakened also a desire of renewing the connection so long neglected. All scruples concerning Delvile had now lost their foundation, since the doubts from which they arose were both explained and removed: she was certain alike of his indifference to Henrietta, and his separation from herself; she knew that nothing was to be feared from painful or offensive rivalry, and she resolved, therefore, to lose no time in seeking the first pleasure to which since her disappointment she had voluntarily looked forward.

Early in the evening, she told Lady Margaret she was going out for an hour or two, and sending again for a chair, was carried to Portland-street.

She enquired for Miss Belfield, and was shewn into a parlour, where she found her drinking tea with her mother, and Mr Hobson, their landlord.

Henrietta almost screamed at her sight, from a sudden impulse of joy and surprize, and, running up to her, flung her arms round her neck, and embraced her with the most rapturous emotion: but then, drawing back with a look of timidity and shame, she bashfully apologized for her freedom, saying, "Indeed, dearest Miss Beverley, it is no want of respect, but I am so very glad to see you it makes me quite forget myself!"

Cecilia, charmed at a reception so ingenuously affectionate, soon satisfied her doubting diffidence by the warmest thanks that she had preserved so much regard

for her, and by doubling the kindness with which she returned her caresses

"Mercy on me, madam," cried Mrs Belfield, who during this time had been busily employed in sweeping the hearth, wiping some slops upon the table, and smoothing her handkerchief and apron, "why the girl's enough to smother you. Henny, how can you be so troublesome? I never saw you behave in this way before."

"Miss Beverley, madam," said Henrietta, again retreating, "is so kind as to pardon me, and I was so much surprised at seeing her, that I hardly knew what I was about."

"The young ladies, ma'am," said Mr Hobson, "have a mighty way of saluting one another till such time as they get husbands: and then I'll warrant you they can meet without any salutation at all. That's my remark, at least, and what I've seen of the world has set me upon making it."

This speech led Cecilia to check, however artless, the tenderness of her fervent young friend, whom she was much teized by meeting in such company, but who seemed not to date understand the frequent looks which she gave her expressive of a wish to be alone with her.

"Come, ladies," continued the facetious Mr Hobson, "what if we were all to sit down, and have a good dish of tea? and suppose, Mrs Belfield, you was to order us a fresh round of toast and butter? do you think the young ladies here would have any objection? and what if we were to have a little more water in the tea-kettle? not forgetting a little more tea in the teapot. What I say is this, let us all be comfortable; that's my notion of things."

"And a very good notion too," said Mrs Belfield, "for you who have nothing to vex you. Ah, ma'am, you have heard, I suppose, about my son? gone off! nobody knows where! left that lord's house, where he

might have lived like a king, and gone out into the wide world nobody knows for what!"

"Indeed?" said Cecilia, who, from seeing him in London concluded he was again with his family, "and has he not acquainted you where he is?"

"No, ma'am, no," cried Mrs Belfield, "he's never once told me where he is gone, nor let me know the least about the matter, for if I did I would not taste a dish of tea again for a twelvemonth till I saw him get back again to that lord's! and I believe in my heart there's never such another in the three kingdoms, for he has sent here after him I dare say a score of times. And no wonder, for I will take upon me to say he won't find his fellow in a hurry, Lord as he is."

"As to his being a Lord," said Mr Hobson, "I am one of them that lay no great stress upon that, unless he has got a good long purse of his own, and then, to be sure, a Lord's no bad thing. But as to the matter of saying Lord such a one, how d'ye do? and Lord such a one, what do you want? and such sort of compliments, why in my mind, it's a mere nothing, in comparison of a good income. As to your son, ma'am, he did not go the right way to work. He should have begun with business, and gone into pleasure afterwards: and if he had but done that, I'll be bold to say we might have had him at this very minute drinking tea with us over this fireside."

"My son, Sir," said Mrs Belfield, rather angrily, "was another sort of a person than a person of business: he always despised it from a child, and come of it what may, I am sure he was born to be a gentleman."

"As to his despising business," said Mr Hobson, very contemptuously, "why so much the worse, for business is no such despiscable thing. And if he had been brought up behind a counter, instead of dangling after these same Lords, why he might have had a house

of his own over his head, and been as good a man as myself."

"A house over his head?" said Mrs Belfield, "why he might have had what he would, and have done what he would, if he had but followed my advice, and put himself a little forward. I have told him a hundred times to ask some of those great people he lived amongst for a place at court, for I know they've so many they hardly know what to do with them, and it was always my design from the beginning that he should be something of a great man; but I never could persuade him, though, for anything I know, as I have often told him, if he had but had a little courage he might have been an Ambassador by this time. And now, all of a sudden, to be gone nobody knows where!"—

"I am sorry, indeed," said Cecilia, who knew not whether most to pity or wonder at her blind folly; "but I doubt not you will hear of him soon."

"As to being an Ambassador, ma'am," said Mr Hobson, "it's talking quite out of character. Those sort of great people keep things of that kind for their own poor relations and cousins. What I say is this; a man's best way is to take care of himself. The more those great people see you want them, the less they like your company. Let every man be brought up to business, and then when he's made his fortune, he may walk with his hat on. Why now there was your friend, ma'am," turning to Cecilia, "that shot out his brains without paying any body a souse; pray how was that being more genteel than standing behind a counter, and not owing a shilling?"

"Do you think a young lady," cried Mrs Belfield warmly, "can bear to hear of such a thing as standing behind a counter? I am sure if my son had ever done it, I should not expect any lady would so much as look at him. And yet, though I say it, she might look a

good while, and not see many such persons, let her look where she pleased. And then he has such a winning manner into the bargain, that I believe in my heart there's never a lady in the land could say no to him. And yet he has such a prodigious shyness, I never could make him own he had so much as asked the question. And what lady can begin first?"

"Why no," said Mr Hobson, "that would be out of character another way. Now my notion is this; let every man be agreeable! and then he may ask what lady he pleases. And when he's a mind of a lady, he should look upon a frown or two as nothing; for the ladies frown in courtship as a thing of course; it's just like a man swearing at a coachman; why he's not a bit more in a passion, only he thinks he sha'n't be minded without it."

"Well, for my part," said Mrs Belfield, "I am sure if I was a young lady, and most especially if I was a young lady of fortune, and all that, I should like a modest young gentleman, such as my son, for example, better by half than a bold swearing young fellow, that would make a point to have me whether I would or no."

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" cried Mr Hobson; "but the young ladies are not of that way of thinking; they are all for a little life and spirit. Don't I say right, young ladies?"

Cecilia, who could not but perceive that these speeches was levelled at herself, felt offended and tired; and finding she had no chance of any private conversation with Henrietta, arose to take leave: but while she stopped in the passage to enquire when she could see her alone, a footman knocked at the door, who, having asked if Mr Belfield lodged there, and been answered in the affirmative, begged to know whether Miss Beverley was then in the house?

Cecilia, much surprised, went forward, and told him who she was.

"I have been, madam," said he, "with a message to you at Mr Monckton's, in Soho-Square: but nobody knew where you was; and Mr Monckton came out and spoke to me himself, and said that all he could suppose was that you might be at this house. So he directed me to come here."

"And from whom, Sir, is your message?"

"From the honourable Mr Delvile, madam, in St James's-Square. He desires to know if you shall be at home on Saturday morning, the day after to-morrow, and whether you can appoint Mr Briggs to meet him by twelve o'clock exactly, as he sha'n't be able to stay above three minutes."

Cecilia gave an answer as cold as the message; that she would be in Soho-Square at the time he mentioned, and acquaint Mr Briggs of his intention.

The footman then went away; and Henrietta told her, that if she could call some morning she might perhaps contrive to be alone with her, and added, "indeed I wish much to see you, if you could possibly do me so great an honour; for I am very miserable, and have nobody to tell so! Ah, Miss Beverley! you that have so many friends, and that deserve as many again, you little know what a hard thing it is to have none!—but my brother's strange disappearing has half broke our hearts!"

Cecilia was beginning a consolatory speech, in which she meant to give her private assurances of his health and safety, when she was interrupted by Mr Albany, who came suddenly into the passage.

Henrietta received him with a look of pleasure, and enquired why he had so long been absent; but, surprised by the sight of Cecilia, he exclaimed, without answering her, "*why didst thou fail me? why appoint*

me to a place thou wert quitting thyself?—thou thing of fair professions! thou inveigler of esteem! thou vain, delusive promiser of pleasure!"

"You condemn me too hastily," said Cecilia; "if I failed in my promise, it was not owing to caprice or insincerity, but to a real and bitter misfortune which incapacitated me from keeping it. I shall soon, however,—nay, I am already at your disposal, if you have any commands for me."

"I have always," answered he, "commands for the rich, for I have always compassion for the poor."

"Come to me, then, at Mr Monckton's in Soho-Square," cried she, and hastened into her chair, impatient to end a conference which she saw excited the wonder of the servants, and which also now drew out from the parlour Mr Hobson and Mrs Belfield. She then kissed her hand to Henrietta, and ordered the chairmen to carry her home.

It had not been without difficulty that she had restrained herself from mentioning what she knew of Belfield, when she found his mother and sister in a state of such painful uncertainty concerning him. But her utter ignorance of his plans, joined to her undoubted knowledge of his wish of concealment, made her fear doing mischief by officiousness, and think it wiser not to betray what she had seen of him, till better informed of his own views and intentions. Yet, willing to shorten a suspence so uneasy to them, she determined to entreat Mr Monckton would endeavour to find him out, and acquaint him with their anxiety.

That gentleman, when she returned to his house, was in a state of mind by no means enviable. Missing her at tea, he had asked Miss Bennet where she was, and hearing she had not left word, he could scarce conceal his chagrin. Knowing, however, how few were her acquaintances in town, he soon concluded she was with

Miss Belfield, but, not satisfied with sending Mr Delvile's messenger after her, he privately employed one in whom he trusted for himself, to make enquiries at the house without saying whence he came.

But though this man was returned, and he knew her safety, he still felt alarmed; he had flattered himself, from the length of time in which she had now done nothing without consulting him, she would scarce even think of any action without his previous concurrence. And he had hoped, by a little longer use, to make his counsel become necessary, which he knew to be a very short step from rendering it absolute.

Nor was he well pleased to perceive, by this voluntary excursion, a struggle to cast off her sadness, and a wish to procure herself entertainment: it was not that he desired her misery, but he was earnest that all relief from it should spring from himself: and though far from displeased that Delvile should lose his sovereignty over her thoughts, he was yet of opinion that, till his own liberty was restored, he had less to apprehend from grief indulged, than grief allayed; one could but lead her to repining retirement, the other might guide her to a consolatory rival.

He well knew, however, it was as essential to his cause to disguise his disappointments as his expectations, and, certain that by pleasing alone he had any chance of acquiring power, he cleared up when Cecilia returned, who as unconscious of feeling, as of owing any subjection to him, preserved uncontrolled the right of acting for herself, however desirous and glad of occasional instruction.

She told him where she had been, and related her meeting Belfield, and the unhappiness of his friends, and hinted her wish that he could be informed what they suffered. Mr Monckton, eager to oblige her, went instantly in search of him, and returning to supper, told

her he had traced him through the Bookseller, who had not the dexterity to parry his artful enquiries, and had actually appointed him to breakfast in Soho-Square the next morning.

He had found him, he said, writing, but in high spirits and good humour. He had resisted, for a while, his invitation on account of his dress, all his clothes but the very coat which he had on being packed up and at his mother's: but, when laughed at by Mr Monckton for still retaining some foppery, he gaily protested what remained of it should be extinguished; and acknowledging that his shame was no part of his philosophy, declared he would throw it wholly aside, and, in spite of his degradation, renew his visits at his house.

"I would not tell him," Mr Monckton continued, "of the anxiety of his family; I thought it would come more powerfully from yourself, who, having seen, can better enforce it."

Cecilia was very thankful for this compliance with her request, and anticipated the pleasure she hoped soon to give Henrietta, by the restoration of a brother so much loved and so regretted.

She sent, mean time, to Mr Briggs the message she had received from Mr Delvile, and had the satisfaction of an answer that he would observe the appointment.

Chapter iij.

A CONFABULATION.

THE next morning, while the family was at breakfast, Belfield, according to his promise, made his visit.

A high colour overspread his face as he entered the room, resulting from a sensation of grief at his fallen

Bellfield's visit

fortune, and shame at his altered appearance, which *though he endeavoured to cover under an air of gaiety* and unconcern, gave an awkwardness to his manners, and a visible distress to his countenance: Mr Monckton received him with pleasure, and Cecilia, who saw the conflict of his philosophy with his pride, dressed her features once more in smiles, which however faint and heartless, shewed her desire to reassure him. Miss Bennet, as usual when not called upon by the master or lady of the house, *sat as a cypher; and Lady Margaret,* always disagreeable and repulsive to the friends of her husband, though she was not now more than commonly *ungracious, struck the quick-feeling and irritable Belfield,* to wear an air of rude superiority meant to reproach him with his disgrace.

This notion, which strongly affected him, made him, for one instant, hesitate whether he should remain another in the same room with her: but the friendliness of Mr Monckton, and the gentleness and good breeding of Cecilia, seemed so studious to make amends for her *moroseness, that he checked his too ready indignation,* and took his seat at the table. Yet was it some time before he could recover even the assumed vivacity which this suspected insult had robbed him of, sufficiently to enter into conversation with any appearance of ease or pleasure. But, after a while, soothed by the attentions of Cecilia and Mr Monckton, his uneasiness wore off, and the native spirit and liveliness of his character broke forth with their accustomed energy.

"This good company, I hope," said he, addressing himself, however, only to Cecilia, "will not so much *mistake the thing as to criticise my dress of this morning;* since it is perfectly according to rule, and to rule established from time immemorial: but lest any of you should so much err as to fancy shabby what is only characteristic, I must endeavour to be beforehand with the

malice of conjecture, and have the honour to inform you, that I am enlisted in the Grub-street regiment, of the third story, and under the tattered banner of scribbling volunteers! a race which, if it boasts not the courage of heroes, at least equals them in enmity. This coat, therefore, is merely the uniform of my *corps, and you will all, I hope, respect it as emblem*atical of wit and erudition."

"We must at least respect you," said Cecilia, "who thus gaily can sport with it."

"Ah, madam!" said he, more seriously, "it is not from you I ought to look for respect! I must appear to you the most unsteady and coward-hearted of beings. But lately I blushed to see you from poverty, though more worthily employed than when I had been seen by you in affluence; that shame vanquished, another equally narrow took its place, and yesterday I blushed again that you detected me in a new pursuit, though I had only quitted my former one from a conviction it was ill chosen. There seems in human nature a worth*lessness not to be conquered! yet I will struggle with* it to the last, and either die in the attempt, or dare seem that which I am, without adding to the miseries of life, the sting, the envenomed sting of dastardly false shame!"

"Your language is wonderfully altered within this twelvemonth," said Mr Monckton; "the *worthlessness of human nature!* the *miseries of life!* this from you! so lately the champion of human nature, and the panegyrist of human life!"

"Soured by personal disappointment," answered he, "I may perhaps speak with too much acrimony; yet, ultimately, my opinions have not much changed. Happiness is given to us with more liberality than we *are willing to confess; it is judgment only that is dealt* us sparingly, and of that we have so little, that when

felicity is before us, we turn to the right or left, or when at the right or left, we proceed strait forward. It has been so with me; I have sought it at a distance, amidst difficulty and danger, when all that I could wish has been immediately within my grasp."

"It must be owned," said Mr Monckton, "after what you have suffered from this world you were wont to defend, there is little reason to wonder at some change in your opinion."

"Yet whatever have been my sufferings," he answered, "I have generally been involved in them by my own rashness or caprice. My last enterprise especially, from which my expectations were highest, was the most ill-judged of any. I considered not how little my way of life had fitted me for the experiment I was making, how irreparably I was enervated by long sedentary habits, and how insufficient for bodily strength was mental resolution. We may fight against partial prejudices, and by spirit and fortitude we may overcome them; but it will not do to war with the general tenor of education. We may blame, despise, regret as we please, but customs long established, and habits long indulged, assume an empire despotic, though their power is but prescriptive. Opposing them is vain; Nature herself, when forced aside, is not more elastic in her rebound."

"Will you not then," said Cecilia, "since your experiment has failed, return again to your family, and to the plan of life you formerly settled?"

"You speak of them together," said he, with a smile, "as if you thought them inseparable; and indeed my own apprehension they would be deemed so, has made me thus fear to see my friends, since I love not resistance, yet cannot again attempt the plan of life they would have me pursue. I have given up my cottage, but my independence is as dear to me as ever; and all

that I have gathered from experience, is to maintain it by those employments for which my education has fitted me, instead of seeking it injudiciously by the very road for which it has unqualified me."

"And what is this independence," cried Mr Monckton, "which has thus bewitched your imagination? a mere idle dream of romance and enthusiasm; without existence in nature, without possibility in life. In uncivilised countries, or in lawless times, independence, for a while, may perhaps stalk abroad; but in a regular government, 'tis only the vision of a heated brain; one part of a community must inevitably hang upon another, and 'tis a farce to call either independent, when to break the chain by which they are linked would prove destruction to both. The soldier wants not the officer more than the officer the soldier, nor the tenant the landlord, more than the landlord the tenant. The rich owe their distinction, their luxuries, to the poor, as much as the poor owe their rewards, their necessaries, to the rich."

"Man treated as an Automaton," answered Belfield, "and considered merely with respect to his bodily operations, may indeed be called dependent, since the food by which he lives, or, rather, without which he dies, cannot wholly be cultivated and prepared by his own hands: but considered in a nobler sense, he deserves not the degrading epithet; speak of him, then, as a being of feeling and understanding, with pride to alarm, with nerves to tremble, with honour to satisfy, and with a soul to be immortal!—as such, may he not claim the freedom of his own thoughts? may not that claim be extended to the liberty of speaking, and the power of being governed by them? and when thoughts, words, and actions are exempt from controul, will you brand him with dependency merely because the Grazier feeds his meat, and the Baker kneeds his bread?"

"But who is there in the whole world," said Mr Monckton, "extensive as it is, and dissimilar as are its inhabitants, that can pretend to assert, his thoughts, words, and actions, are exempt from controul? even where interest, which you so much disdain, interferes not,—though where that is I confess I cannot tell!—are we not kept silent where we wish to reprove by the fear of offending? and made speak where we wish to be silent by the desire of obliging? do we not bow to the scoundrel as low as to the man of honour? are we not by mere forms kept standing when tired? made give place to those we despise? and smiles to those we hate? or if we refuse these attentions, are we not regarded as savages, and shut out of society?"

"All these," answered Belfield, "are so merely matters of ceremony, that the concession can neither cost pain to the proud, nor give pleasure to the vain. The bow is to the coat, the attention is to the rank, and the fear of offending ought to extend to all mankind. Homage such as this infringes not our sincerity, since it is as much a matter of course as the dress that we wear, and has as little reason to flatter a man as the shadow which follows him. I no more, therefore, hold him deceitful for not opposing this pantomimical parade, than I hold him to be dependent for eating corn he has not sown."

"Where, then, do you draw the line? and what is the boundary beyond which your independence must not step?"

"I hold that man," cried he, with energy, "to be independent, who treats the Great as the Little, and the Little as the Great, who neither exults in riches nor blushes in poverty, who owes no man a groat, and who spends not a shilling he has not earned."

"You will not, indeed, then, have a very numerous acquaintance, if this is the description of those with whom you purpose to associate! but is it possible you

imagine you can live by such notions? why the Carthusian in his monastery, who is at least removed from temptation, is not mortified so severely as a man of spirit living in the world, who would prescribe himself such rules."

"Not merely have I prescribed," returned Belfield, "I have already put them in practice; and far from finding any pennance, I never before found happiness. I have now adopted, though poor, the very plan of life I should have elected if rich; my pleasure, therefore, is become my business, and my business my pleasure."

"And is this plan," cried Monckton, "nothing more than turning Knight-errant to the Booksellers?"

"'Tis a Knight-errantry," answered Belfield, laughing, "which, however ludicrous it may seem to you, requires more soul and more brains than any other. Our giants may, indeed, be only windmills, but they must be attacked with as much spirit, and conquered with as much bravery, as any fort or any town, in time of war [to] be demolished; and though the siege, I must confess, may be of less national utility, the assailants of the quill have their honour as much at heart as the assailants of the sword."

"I suppose then," said Monckton, archly, "if a man wants a biting lampoon, or an handsome panegyric, some newspaper scandal, or a sonnet for a lady—"

"No, no," interrupted Belfield eagerly, "if you imagine me a hireling scribbler for the purposes of defamation or of flattery, you as little know my situation as my character. My subjects shall be my own, and my satire shall be general. I would as much disdain to be personal with an anonymous pen, as to attack an unarmed man in the dark with a dagger I had kept concealed."

A reply of rallying incredulity was rising to the lips of Mr Monckton, when reading in the looks of Cecilia

an entire approbation of this sentiment, he checked his desire of ridicule, and exclaimed, "spoken like a man of honour, and one whose works may profit the world!"

"From my earliest youth to the present hour," continued Belfield, "literature has been the favourite object of my pursuit, my recreation in leisure, and my hope in employment. *My propensity to it, indeed, has been so* ungovernable, that I may properly call it the source of my several miscarriages throughout life. It was the bar to my preferment, for it gave me a distaste to other studies; it was the cause of my unsteadiness in all my undertakings, because to all I preferred it. It has sunk me to distress, it has involved me in difficulties; it has brought me to the brink of ruin by making me neglect the means of living, yet never, till now, did I discern it *might itself be my support.*"

"I am heartily glad, Sir," said Cecilia, "your various enterprizes and struggles have at length ended in a project which promises you so much satisfaction. But you will surely suffer your sister and your mother to partake of it? for who is there that your prosperity will make so happy?"

"You do them infinite honour, madam, by taking any interest in their affairs; but to own to you the truth, *what to me appears prosperity, will to them wear* another aspect. They have looked forward to my elevation with expectations the most improbable, and thought everything within my grasp, with a simplicity incredible. But though their hopes were absurd, I am pained by their disappointment, and I have not courage to meet their tears, which I am sure will not be spared when they see me."

"'Tis from tenderness, then," said Cecilia, half smiling, "that you are cruel, and from affection to your friends that you make them believe you have forgotten them?"

There was a delicacy in this reproach exactly suited to work upon Belfield, who feeling it with quickness, started up, and cried, "I believe I am wrong!—I will go to them this moment!"

Cecilia felt eager to second the generous impulse; but Mr Monckton, laughing at his impetuosity, insisted he should first finish his breakfast.

"Your friends," said Cecilia, "can have no mortification so hard to bear as your voluntary absence; and if they see but that you are happy, they will soon be reconciled to whatever situation you may chuse."

"Happy!" repeated he, with animation, "Oh I am in Paradise! I am come from a region in the first rude state of nature, to civilization and refinement! the life I led at the cottage was the life of a savage; no intercourse with society, no consolation from books; my mind locked up, every source dried of intellectual delight, and no enjoyment in my power but from sleep and from food. Weary of an existence which thus levelled me with a brute, I grew ashamed of the approximation, and listening to the remonstrance of my understanding, I gave up the precipitate plan, to pursue one more consonant to reason. I came to town, hired a room, and sent for pen, ink and paper: what I have written are trifles, but the Bookseller has not rejected them. I was settled, therefore, in a moment, and comparing my new occupation with that I had just quitted, I seemed exalted on the sudden from a mere creature of instinct, to a rational and intelligent being. But when first I opened a book, after so long an abstinence from all mental nourishment,—Oh it was rapture! no half-famished beggar regaled suddenly with food, ever seized on his repast with more hungry avidity."

"Let fortune turn which way it will," cried Monckton, "you may defy all its malice, while possessed of a spirit of enjoyment which nothing can subdue!"

"But were you not, Sir," said Cecilia, "as great an enthusiast the other day for your cottage, and for labour?"

"I was, madam; but there my philosophy was erroneous: in my ardour to fly from meanness and from dependence, I thought in labour and retirement I should find freedom and happiness; but I forgot that my body was not seasoned for such work, and considered not that a mind which had once been opened by knowledge, could ill endure the contraction of dark and perpetual ignorance. The approach, however, of winter, brought me acquainted with my mistake. It grew cold, it grew bleak; little guarded against the inclemency of the weather, I felt its severity in every limb, and missed a thousand indulgencies which in possession I had never valued. To rise at break of day, chill, freezing, and comfortless! no sun abroad, no fire at home! to go out in all weather to work, that work rough, coarse, and laborious!—unused to such hardships, I found I could not bear them, and, however unwillingly, was compelled to relinquish the attempt."

Breakfast now being over, he again arose to take leave.

"You are going, then, Sir," said Cecilia, "immediately to your friends?"

"No, madam," answered he hesitating, "not just this moment; to-morrow morning perhaps,—but it is now late, and I have business for the rest of the day."

"Ah, Mr Monckton!" cried Cecilia, "what mischief have you done by occasioning this delay!"

"This goodness, madam," said Belfield, "my sister can never sufficiently acknowledge. But I will own, that though, just now, in a warm moment, I felt eager to present myself to her and my mother, I rather wish, now I am cooler, to be saved the pain of telling them in person my situation. I mean, therefore, first to write to them."

"You will not fail, then, to see them to-morrow?"

"Certainly—I think not."

"Nay, but certainly you *must* not, for I shall call upon them to-day, and assure them they may expect you. Can I soften your task of writing by giving them any message from you?"

"Ah, madam, have a care!" cried he; "this condescension to a poor author may be more dangerous than you have any suspicion! and before you have power to help yourself, you may see your name prefixed to the Dedication of some trumpery pamphlet!"

"I will run," cried she, "all risks; remember, therefore, you will be responsible for the performance of my promise."

"I will be sure," answered he, "not to forget what reflects so much honour upon myself."

Cecilia was satisfied by this assent, and he then went away.

"A strange flighty character!" cried Mr Monckton, "yet of uncommon capacity, and full of genius. Were he less imaginative, wild and eccentric, he has abilities for any station, and might fix and distinguish himself almost where-ever he pleased."

"I knew not," said Cecilia, "the full worth of steadiness and prudence till I knew this young man; for he has every thing else; talents the most striking, a love of virtue the most elevated, and manners the most pleasing; yet wanting steadiness and prudence, he can neither act with consistency nor prosper with continuance."

"He is well enough," said Lady Margaret, who had heard the whole argument in sullen taciturnity, "he is well enough, I say; and there comes no good from young women's being so difficult."

Cecilia, offended by a speech which implied a rude desire to dispose of her, went up stairs to her own

room; and Mr Monckton, always enraged when young men and Cecilia were alluded to in the same sentence, retired to his library.

She then ordered a chair, and went to Portland-street, to fulfil what she had offered to Belfield, and to revive his mother and sister by the pleasure of the promised interview.

She found them together: and her intelligence being of equal consequence to both, she did not now repine at the presence of Mrs Belfield. She made her communication with the most cautious attention to their characters, softening the ill she had to relate with respect to Belfield's present way of living, by endeavouring to awaken affection and joy from the prospect of the approaching meeting. She counselled them as much as possible to restrain their chagrin at his misfortunes, which he would but construe into reproach of his ill management; and she represented that when once he was restored to his family, he might almost imperceptibly be led into some less wild and more profitable scheme of business.

When she had told all she thought proper to relate, kindly interspersing her account with the best advice and best comfort she could suggest, she made an end of her visit; for the affliction of Mrs Belfield upon hearing the actual situation of her son, was so clamorous and unappeaseable, that, little wondering at Belfield's want of courage to encounter it, and having no opportunity in such a storm to console the soft Henrietta, whose tears flowed abundantly that her brother should thus be fallen, she only promised before she left town to see her again, and beseeching Mrs Belfield to moderate her concern, was glad to leave the house, where her presence had no power to quiet their distress.

She passed the rest of the day in sad reflections upon

the meeting she was herself to have the next morning with Mr Delvile. She wished ardently to know whether his son was gone abroad, and whether Mrs Delvile was recovered, whose health, in her own letter, was mentioned in terms the most melancholy: yet neither of these enquiries could she even think of making, since reasonably, without them, apprehensive of some reproach.

Chapter ib.

A WRANGLING.

MR MONCKTON, the next day, as soon as breakfast was over, went out, to avoid showing, even to Cecilia, the anxiety he felt concerning the regulation of her fortune, and arrangement of her affairs. He strongly, however, advised her not to mention her large debt, which, though contracted in the innocence of the purest benevolence, would incur nothing but reproof and disapprobation, from all who only heard of it, when they heard of its inutility.

At eleven o'clock, though an hour before the time appointed, while Cecilia was sitting in Lady Margaret's dressing room, "with sad civility and an aching head," she was summoned to Mr Briggs in the parlour.

He immediately began reproaching her with having eloped from him, in the summer, and with the various expences she had caused him from useless purchases and spoilt provisions. He then complained of Mr Delvile, whom he charged with defrauding him of his dues; but observing in the midst of his railing her dejection of countenance, he suddenly broke off, and looking at her with some concern, said, "what's the matter, Ducky? a'n't well? look as if you could not help it."

"O yes," cried Cecilia, "I thank you, Sir, I am very well."

"What do you look so blank for, then?" said he, "hay? what are fretting for?—crossed in love?—lost your sweetheart?"

"No, no, no," cried she, with quickness.

"Never mind, my chick, never mind," said he, pinching her cheek, with resumed good humour, "more to be had; if one won't snap, another will; put me in a passion by going off from me with that old grandee, or would have got one long ago. Hate that old Don; used me very ill; wish I could trounce him. Thinks more of a fusty old parchment than the price of stocks. Fit for nothing but to be stuck upon an old monument for a Death's head."

He then told her that her accounts were all made out, and he was ready at any time to produce them; he approved much of her finishing wholly with the *old Don*, who had been a mere cypher in the executorship; but he advised her not to think of taking her money into her own hands, as he was willing to keep the charge of it himself till she was married.

Cecilia, thanking him for the offer, said she meant now to make her acknowledgments for all the trouble he had already taken, but by no means purposed to give him any more.

He debated the matter with her warmly, told her she had no chance to save herself from knaves and cheats, but by trusting to nobody but himself, and informing her what interest he had already made of her money, enquired how she would set about getting more?

Cecilia, though prejudiced against him by Mr Monckton, knew not how to combat his arguments; yet conscious that scarce any part of the money to which he alluded was in fact her own, she could not

yield to them. He was, however, so stubborn and so difficult to deal with, that she at length let him talk without troubling herself to answer, and privately determined to beg Mr Monckton would fight her battle.

She was not, therefore, displeased by his interruption, though very much surprised by the sight of his person, when, in the midst of Mr Briggs's oratory, Mr Hobson entered the parlour.

"I ask pardon, ma'am," cried he, "if I intrude; but I made free to call upon the account of two ladies that are acquaintances of yours, that are quite, as one may say, at their wit's ends."

"What is the matter with them, Sir?"

"Why, ma'am, no great matter, but mothers are soon frightened, and when once they are upon the fret, one may as well talk to the boards! they know no more of reasoning and arguing, than they do of a shop ledger! however, my maxim is this; every body in their way; one has no more right to expect courageousness from a lady in them cases, than one has from a child in arms; for what I say is, they have not the proper use of their heads, which makes it very excusable."

"But what has occasioned any alarm? nothing, I hope, is the matter with Miss Belfield?"

"No, ma'am; thank God, the young lady enjoys her health very well: but she is taking on just in the same way as her mamma, as what can be more natural? Example, ma'am, is apt to be catching, and one lady's crying makes another think she must do the same, for a little thing serves for a lady's tears, being they can cry at any time: but a man is quite of another nature, let him but have a good conscience, and be clear of the world, and I'll engage he'll not wash his face without soap! that's what I say!"

"Will, will!" cried Mr Briggs, "do it myself!

never use soap; nothing but waste; take a little sand; does as well."

"Let every man have his own proposal;" answered Hobson; "for my part, I take every morning a large bowl of water, and souse my whole head in it; and then when I've rubbed it dry, on goes my wig, and I am quite fresh and agreeable: and then I take a walk in Tottenham Court Road as far as the Tabernacle, or thereabouts, and snuff in a little fresh country air, and then I come back, with a good wholesome appetite, and in a fine breathing heat, asking the young lady's pardon; and I enjoy my pot of fresh tea, and my round of hot toast and butter, with as good a relish as if I was a Prince."

"Pot of fresh tea," cried Briggs, "bring a man to ruin; toast and butter! never suffer it in my house. Breakfast on water-gruel, sooner done; fills one up in a second. Give it my servants; can't eat much of it. Bob 'em there!" nodding significantly.

"Water-gruel!" exclaimed Mr Hobson, "why I could not get it down if I might have the world for it! it would make me quite sick, asking the young lady's pardon, by reason I should always think I was preparing for the small-pox. My notion is quite of another nature; the first thing I do is to have a good fire; for what I say is this, if a man is cold in his fingers, it's odds if ever he gets warm in his purse! ha! ha! *warm*, you take me, Sir? I mean a pun. Though I ought to ask pardon, for I suppose the young lady don't know what I am a saying."

"I should indeed be better pleased, Sir," said Cecilia, "to hear what you have to say about Miss Belfield."

"Why, ma'am, the thing is this; we have been expecting the young 'Squire, as I call him, all the morning, and he has never come; so Mrs Belfield, not knowing where to send after him, was of opinion he might be here, knowing your kindness to him, and that."

"You make the enquiry at the wrong place, Sir," said Cecilia, much provoked by the implication it conveyed; "*if Mr Belfield is in this house, you must seek* him with Mr Monckton."

"You take no offence, I hope, ma'am, at my just asking of the question? for Mrs Belfield crying, and being in that dilemma, I thought I could do no less than oblige her by coming to see if the young gentleman was here."

"What's this? what's this?" cried Mr Briggs eagerly; "who are talking of? hay?—who do mean? is this the sweet heart? eh, Duck?"

"No, no, Sir," cried Cecilia.

"No tricks! won't be bit! who is it? will know; *tell me, I say!*"

"*I'll* tell you, Sir," cried Mr Hobson; "it's a very handsome young gentleman, with as fine a person, and as genteel a way of behaviour, and withal, as pretty a manner of dressing himself, and that, as any lady need desire. He has no great head for business, as I am told, but the ladies don't stand much upon that topic, being they know nothing of it themselves."

"Has got the ready?" cried Mr Briggs, impatiently; "can cast an account? that's the point; can come down handsomely? eh?"

"Why as to that, Sir, I'm not bound to speak to a *gentleman's private affairs. What's my own, is my* own, and what is another person's, is another person's; that's my way of arguing, and that's what I call talking to the purpose."

"Dare say he's a rogue! don't have him, chick. Bet a wager i'n't worth two shillings; and that will go for powder and pomatum; hate a plaistered pate; commonly a numscull: love a good bob-jerom."

"Why this is talking quite wide of the mark," said Mr Hobson, "to suppose a young lady of

fortunes would marry a man with a bob-jerom. What I say is, let every body follow their nature; that's the way to be comfortable; and then if they pay every one his own, who's a right to call 'em to account, whether they wear a bob-jerom, or a pig-tail down to the calves of their legs?"

"Ay, ay," cried Briggs, sneeringly, "or whether they stuff their gullets with hot rounds of toast and butter."

"And what if they do, Sir?" returned Hobson, a little angrily; "when a man's got above the world, where's the harm of living a little genteel? as to a round of toast and butter, and a few oysters, fresh opened, by way of a damper before dinner, no man need be ashamed of them, provided he pays as he goes: and as to living upon water-gruel, and scrubbing one's flesh with sand, one might as well be a galley-slave at once. You don't understand life, Sir, I see that."

"Do! do!" cried Briggs, speaking through his shut teeth; "you're out there! oysters!—come to ruin, tell you! bring you to jail!"

"To jail, Sir?" exclaimed Hobson, "this is talking quite ungenteel! let every man be civil; that's what I say, for that's the way to make every thing agreeable: but as to telling a man he'll go to jail, and that, it's tantamount to affronting him."

A rap at the street-door gave now a new relief to Cecilia, who began to grow very apprehensive lest the delight of spending money, thus warmly contested with that of hoarding it, should give rise to a quarrel, which, between two such sturdy champions for their own opinions, might lead to a conclusion rather more rough and violent than she desired to witness: but when the parlour-door opened, instead of Mr Delvile, whom she now fully expected, Mr Albany made his entrance.

This was rather distressing, as her real business with

her guardians made it proper her conference with them should be undisturbed: and Albany was not a man with whom a hint that she was engaged could be risked: but she had made no preparation to guard against interruption, as her little acquaintance in London had prevented her expecting any visitors.

He advanced with a solemn air to Cecilia, and, looking *as if hardly determined whether to speak with* severity or gentleness, said, "once more I come to prove thy sincerity; now wilt thou go with me where sorrow calls thee? sorrow thy charity can mitigate?"

"I am very much concerned," she answered, "but indeed at present it is utterly impossible."

"Again," cried he, with a look at once stern and disappointed, "again thou failest me? what wanton trifling! why shouldst thou thus elate a worn-out mind, only to make it feel its lingering credulity? or why, teaching me to think I had found an angel, so unkindly undeceive me?"

"Indeed," said Cecilia, much affected by this reproof, "if you knew how heavy a loss I had personally suffered—"

"I do know it," cried he, "and I grieved for thee when I heard it. Thou hast lost a faithful old friend, a loss which with every setting sun thou may'st mourn, for the rising sun will never repair it! but was that a reason for shunning the duties of humanity? was the sight of death a motive for neglecting the claims of benevolence? ought it not rather to have hastened your fulfilling them? and should not your own suffering experience of the brevity of life, have taught you the vanity of all things but preparing for its end?"

"Perhaps so, but my grief at that time made me think only of myself."

"And of what else dost thou think now?"

"Most probably of the same person still!" said she,

half smiling, "but yet believe me, I have real business to transact."

"Frivolous, unmeaning, ever-ready excuses! what business is so important as the relief of a fellow-creature?"

"I shall not, I hope, there," answered she, with alacrity, "be backward; but at least for this morning I must beg to make you my Almoner."

She then took out her purse.

Mr Briggs and Mr Hobson, whose quarrel had been suspended by the appearance of a third person, and who had stood during this short dialogue in silent amazement, having first lost their anger in their mutual consternation, now lost their consternation in their mutual displeasure: Mr Hobson felt offended to hear business spoken of slightly, and Mr Briggs felt enraged at the sight of Cecilia's ready purse. Neither of them, however, knew which way to interfere, the stern gravity of Albany, joined to a language too lofty for their comprehension, intimidating them both. They took, however, the relief of communing with one another, and Mr Hobson said in a whisper "This, you must know, is, I am told, a very particular old gentleman; quite what I call a genius. He comes often to my house, to see my lodger Miss Henny Belfield, though I never happen to light upon him myself, except once in the passage: but what I hear of him is this; he makes a practice, as one may say, of going about into people's houses, to do nothing but find fault."

"Shan't get into mine!" returned Briggs, "promise him that! don't half like him; be bound he's an old sharper."

Cecilia, mean time, enquired what he desired to have.

"Half a guinea," he answered.

"Will that do?"

"For those who have nothing," said he, "it is much. Hereafter, you may assist them again. Go

but and see their distresses, and you will wish to give them every thing."

Mr Briggs now, when actually between her fingers he saw the half guinea, could contain no longer; he twitched the sleeve of her gown, and pinching her arm, with a look of painful eagerness, said in a whisper "Don't give it! don't let him have it! chouse him, chouse him! nothing but an old bite!"

"Pardon me, Sir," said Cecilia, in a low voice, "his character is very well known to me." And then, disengaging her arm from him, she presented her little offering.

At this sight, Mr Briggs was almost outrageous, and losing in his wrath, all fear of the stranger, he burst forth with fury into the following outcries, "Be ruined! see it plainly; be fleeced! be stript! be robbed! won't have a gown to your back! won't have a shoe to your foot! won't have a rag in the world! be a beggar in the street! come to the parish! not in a jail!—half a guinea at a time!—enough to break the Great Mogul!"

"Inhuman spirit of selfish parsimony!" exclaimed Albany, "repinest thou at this loan, given from thousands to those who have worse than nothing? who pay to-day in hunger for bread they borrowed yesterday from pity? who to save themselves from the deadly pangs of famine, solicit but what the rich know not when they possess, and miss not when they give?"

"Anan!" cried Briggs, recovering his temper from the perplexity of his understanding, at a discourse to which his ears were wholly unaccustomed, "what d'ye say?"

"*If to thyself distress may cry in vain,*" continued Albany, "if thy own heart resists the suppliant's prayer, callous to entreaty, and hardened in the world, suffer, at least, a creature yet untainted, who melts at sorrow, and who glows with charity, to pay from her vast wealth a generous tax of thankfulness, that fate has not reversed her doom, and those whom she relieves, relieve not her!"

"Anan!" was again all the wondering Mr Briggs could say.

"Pray, ma'am," said Mr Hobson, to Cecilia, "if it's no offence, was the Gentleman ever a player?"

"I fancy not, indeed!"

"I ask pardon, then, ma'am; I mean no harm; *but my notion was the gentleman might be speaking* something by heart."

"Is it but on the stage, humanity exists?" cried Albany, *indignantly*; "*Oh thither hasten, then,* ye monopolizers of plenty! ye selfish, unfeeling engrossers of wealth, which ye dissipate without enjoying, *and of abundance, which ye waste while ye refuse* to distribute! thither, thither haste, if there humanity exists!"

"*As to engrossing,*" said Mr Hobson, happy to hear at last a word with which he was familiar, "it's what I never approved myself. My maxim is this; if a *man makes a fair penny, without any underhand dealings,* why he has as much a title to enjoy his pleasure as the Chief Justice, or the Lord Chancellor: and it's odds but he's as happy as a greater man. Though what I hold to be best of all, is a clear conscience, with a neat income of 2 or 3000 a year. That's my notion; and I don't think it's a bad one."

"Weak policy of short-sighted ignorance!" cried Albany, "to wish for what, if used, brings care, and if neglected, remorse! have you not now beyond what nature craves? why then still sigh for more?"

"Why?" cried Mr Briggs, who by dint of deep attention began now better to comprehend him, "why to buy in, to be sure! ever hear of stocks, eh? know any thing of money?"

"Still to make more and more," cried Albany, "and wherefore? to spend in vice and idleness, or hoard in chearless misery! not to give succour to the

wretched, not to support the falling; all is for self, however little wanted, all goes to added stores, or added luxury; no fellow-creature served, nor even one beggar relieved!"

"Glad of it!" cried Briggs, "glad of it; would not have 'em relieved; don't like 'em; hate a beggar; ought to be all whipt; live upon spunging."

"Why as to a beggar, I must needs say," cried Mr Hobson, "I am by no means an approver of that mode of proceeding; being I take 'em all for cheats: for what I say is this, what a man earns, he earns, and it's *no man's business to enquire what he spends*, for a free-born Englishman is his own master by the nature of the law, and as to his being a subject, why a duke is no more, nor a judge, nor the Lord High Chancellor, and the like of those; which makes it tantamount to nothing, being he is answerable to nobody by the right of Magna Charta: except in cases of treason, felony, and that. But as to a beggar, it's quite another thing; he comes and asks me for money; but what has he to shew for it? what does he bring me in exchange? why a long story that he i'n't worth a penny! what's that to me? nothing at all. Let every man have his own; that's my way of arguing."

"Ungentle mortals!" cried Albany, "in wealth exulting; even in inhumanity! think you these wretched outcasts have less sensibility than yourselves? think you, *in cold and hunger, they lose those feelings which even* in voluptuous prosperity from time to time disturb you? you say they are all cheats? 'tis but the niggard cant of avarice, to lure away remorse from obduracy. Think you the naked wanderer begs from choice? give him your wealth and try."

"Give him a whip!" cried Briggs, "sha'n't have a souse! send him to Bridewell! nothing but a pauper; hate 'em; hate 'em all! full of tricks; break their own

legs, put out their arms, cut off their fingers, snap their own ancles,—all for what? to get at the chink! to chouse us of cash! ought to be well flogged; have 'em all sent to the Thames; worse than the Convicts."

"Poor subterfuge of callous cruelty! you cheat yourselves, to shun the fraud of others! and yet, how better do you use the wealth so guarded? what nobler purpose can it answer to you, than even a chance to snatch some wretch from sinking? think less how *much* ye save, and more for *what*; and then consider how thy full coffers may hereafter make reparation, for the empty catalogue of thy virtues."

"Anan!" said Mr Briggs, again lost in perplexity and wonder.

"Oh yet," continued Albany, turning towards Cecilia, "preach not here the hardness which ye practice; rather amend yourselves than corrupt her; and give with liberality what ye ought to receive with gratitude!"

"This is not my doctrine," cried Hobson; "I am not a near man, neither, but as to giving at that rate, it's quite out of character. I have as good a right to my own savings, as to my own gettings; and what I say is this, who'll give to *me*? let me see that, and it's quite another thing: and begin who will, I'll be bound to go on with him, pound for pound, or pence for pence. But as to giving to them beggars, it's what I don't approve; I pay the poor's rate, and that's what I call charity enough for any man. But for the matter of living well, and spending one's money handsomely, and having one's comforts about one, why it's a thing of another nature, and I can say this for myself, and that is, I never grudged myself any thing in my life. I always made myself agreeable, and lived on the best. That's my way."

"Bad way too," cried Briggs, "never get on with

it, never see beyond your nose; won't be worth a plum while your head wags!" then, taking Cecilia apart, "hark'ee, my duck," he added, pointing to Albany, "who is that Mr Bounce, eh? what is he?"

"I have known him but a short time, Sir; but I think of him very highly."

"Is he a *good* man? that's the point, is he a *good* man?"

"Indeed he appears to me uncommonly benevolent and charitable."

"But that i'n't the thing; is he *warm?* that's the point, is he *warm?*"

"If you mean *passionate*," said Cecilia, "I believe the energy of his manner is merely to enforce what he says."

"Don't take me, don't take me," cried he, impatiently; "can come down with the ready, that's the matter; can chink the little gold boys? eh?"

"Why I rather fear not by his appearance; but I know nothing of his affairs."

"What does come for? eh? come a courting?"

"Mercy on me, no!"

"What for then? only a spunging?"

"No, indeed. He seems to have no wish but to assist and plead for others."

"All fudge! think he i'n't touched? ay, ay; nothing but a trick! only to get at the chink: see he's as poor as a rat, talks of nothing but giving money; a bad sign! if he'd got any, would not do it. Wanted to make us come down; warrant thought to bam us all! out there! a'n't so soon gulled."

A knock at the street door gave now a new interruption, and Mr Delvile at length appeared.

Cecilia, whom his sight could not fail to disconcert, felt doubly distressed by the unnecessary presence of Albany and Hobson; she regretted the absence of Mr

Monckton, who could easily have taken them away; for though without scruple she could herself have acquainted Mr Hobson she had business, she dreaded offending Albany, whose esteem she was ambitious of obtaining.

Mr Delvile entered the room with an air stately and erect; he took off his hat, but deigned not to make the smallest inclination of his head, nor offered any excuse to Mr Briggs for being past the hour of his appointment: but having advanced a few paces, without looking either to the right or left, said, "as I have never acted, my coming may not, perhaps, be essential; but as my name is in the Dean's Will, and I have once or twice met the other executors mentioned in it, I think it a duty I owe to my own heirs to prevent any possible future enquiry or trouble to them."

This speech was directly addressed to no one, though meant to be attended to by every one, and seemed proudly uttered as a mere apology to himself for not having declined the meeting.

Cecilia, though she recovered from her confusion by the help of her aversion to this self-sufficiency, made not any answer. Albany retired to a corner of the room; Mr Hobson began to believe it was time for him to depart; and Mr Briggs thinking only of the quarrel in which he had separated with Mr Delvile in the summer, stood swelling with venom, which he longed for an opportunity to spit out.

Mr Delvile, who regarded this silence as the effect of his awe-inspiring presence, became rather more complacent; but casting his eyes round the room, and perceiving the two strangers, he was visibly surprised, and looking at Cecilia for some explanation, seemed to stand suspended from the purpose of his visit till he heard one.

Cecilia, earnest to have the business concluded, turned

to Mr Briggs, and said, "Sir, here is pen and ink: are you to write, or am I? or what is to be done?"

"No, no," said he, with a sneer, "give it t'other; all in our turn; don't come before his Grace the Right Honourable Mr Vampus."

"Before whom, Sir?" said Mr Delvile, reddening.

"Before my Lord Don Pedigree," answered Briggs, with a spiteful grin, "know him? eh? ever hear of such a person?"

Mr Delvile coloured still deeper, but turning contemptuously from him, disdained making any reply.

Mr Briggs, who now regarded him as a defeated man, said exultingly to Mr Hobson, "what do stand here for?—hay?—fall o' your marrowbones; don't see 'Squire High and Mighty?"

"As to falling on my marrowbones," answered Mr Hobson, "it's what I shall do to no man, except he was the King himself, or the like of that, and going to make me Chancellor of the Exchequer, or Commissioner of Excise. Not that I mean the gentleman any offence; but a man's a man, and for one man to worship another is quite out of law."

"Must, must!" cried Briggs, "tell all his old grand-dads else: keeps 'em in a roll; locks 'em in a closet; says his prayers to 'em; can't live without 'em: likes 'em better than cash!—wish had 'em here! pop 'em all in the sink!"

"If your intention, Sir," cried Mr Delvile, fiercely, "is only to insult me, I am prepared for what measures I shall take. I declined seeing you in my own house, that I might not be under the same restraint as when it was my unfortunate lot to meet you last."

"Who cares?" cried Briggs, with an air of defiance, "what can do, eh? poke me into a family vault? bind me o' top of an old monument? tie me to a stinking

carcase? make a corpse of me, and call it one of your famous cousins?—"

"For heaven's sake, Mr Briggs," interrupted Cecilia, *who saw that Mr Delvile, trembling with passion, scarce* refrained lifting up his stick, "be appeased, and let us finish our business!"

Albany now, hearing in Cecilia's voice the alarm with which she was seized, came forward and exclaimed, "Whence this unmeaning dissension? to what purpose this irritating abuse? Oh vain and foolish! *live ye so happily, last ye so long, that time and peace* may thus be trifled with?"

"There, there!" cried Briggs, holding up his finger at Mr Delvile, "have it now! got old Mr Bounce upon you! give you enough of it; promise you that!"

"Restrain," continued Albany, "this idle wrath; and if ye have ardent passions, employ them to nobler *uses; let them stimulate acts of virtue, let them animate* deeds of beneficence! Oh waste not spirits that may urge you to good, lead you to honour, warm you to charity, in poor and angry words, in unfriendly, unmanly debate!"

Mr Delvile, who from the approach of Albany, had given him his whole attention, was struck with astonish*ment at this address, and almost petrified with wonder* at his language and exhortations.

"Why I must own," said Mr Hobson, "as to this matter I am much of the same mind myself; for quarreling's a thing I don't uphold; being it advances one no way; for what I say is this, if a man gets the better, he's only where he was before, and if he gets *worsted, why it's odds but the laugh's against him*: so, if I may make bold to give my verdict, I would have one of these gentlemen take the other by the hand, and so put an end to bad words. That's my maxim, and that's what I call being agreeable."

Mr Delvile, at the words *one of these gentlemen take the other by the hand*, looked scornfully upon Mr Hobson, with a frown that expressed his highest indignation, at being thus familiarly coupled with Mr Briggs. And then, turning from him to Cecilia, haughtily said, "Are these two persons," pointing towards Albany and Hobson, "waiting here to be witnesses to any transaction?"

"No, Sir, no," cried Hobson, "I don't mean to intrude, I am going directly. So you can give me no insight, ma'am," addressing Cecilia, "as to where I might light upon Mr Belfield?"

"Me? no!" cried she, much provoked by observing that Mr Delvile suddenly looked at her.

"Well, ma'am, well, I mean no harm: only I hold it that the right way to hear of a young gentleman, is to ask for him of a young lady: that's my maxim. Come, Sir," to Mr Briggs, "you and I had like to have fallen out, but what I say is this; let no man bear malice; that's my way: so I hope we part without ill blood?"

"Ay, ay;" said Mr Briggs, giving him a nod.

"Well, then," added Hobson, "I hope the good-will may go round, and that not only you and I, but these two good old gentlemen will also lend a hand."

Mr Delvile now was at a loss which way to turn for very rage; but after looking at every one with a face flaming with ire, he said to Cecilia, "If you have collected together these persons for the purpose of affronting me, I must beg you to remember I am not one to be affronted with impunity!"

Cecilia, half frightened, was beginning an answer that disclaimed any such intention, when Albany, with the most indignant energy, called out, "Oh pride of heart, with littleness of soul! check this vile arrogance, too vain for man, and spare to others some part of that

lenity thou nourishest for thyself, or justly bestow on thyself that contempt thou nourishest for others!"

And with these words he sternly left the house.

The thunderstruck Mr Delvile began now to fancy that all the demons of torment were designedly let loose upon him, and his surprise and resentment operated so powerfully that it was only in broken sentences he could express either. "Very extraordinary!—a new method of conduct!—liberties to which I am not much used!—impertinences I shall not hastily forget,—treatment that would scarce be pardonable to a person wholly unknown!—"

"Why indeed, Sir," said Hobson, "I can't but say it was rather a cut up; but the old gentleman is what one may call a genius, which makes it a little excusable; for he does things all his own way, and I am told it's the same thing who he speaks to, so he can but find fault, and that."

"Sir," interrupted the still more highly offended Mr Delvile, "what *you* may be told is extremely immaterial to *me*; and I must take the liberty to hint to you, a conversation of this easy kind is not what I am much in practice in hearing."

"Sir, I ask pardon," said Hobson, "I meant nothing but what was agreeable; however, I have done, and I wish you good day. Your humble servant, ma'am, and I hope, Sir," to Mr Briggs, "you won't begin bad words again?"

"No, no," said Briggs, "ready to make up; all at end; only don't much like *Spain*, that's all!" winking significantly, "nor a'n't over fond of a *skeleton!*"

Mr Hobson now retired; and Mr Delvile and Mr Briggs, being both wearied and both in haste to have done, settled in about five minutes all for which they met, after passing more than an hour in agreeing what that was.

Mr Briggs then, saying he had an engagement upon

business, declined settling his own accounts till another time, but promised to see Cecilia again soon, and added, "be sure take care of that old Mr Bounce! cracked in the noddle; see that with half an eye! better not trust him! break out some day: do you a mischief!"

He then went away: but while the parlour-door was still open, to the no little surprise of Cecilia, the servant announced Mr Belfield. He hardly entered the room, and his countenance spoke haste and eagerness. "I have this moment, madam," he said, "been informed a complaint has been lodged against me here, and I could not rest till I had the honour of assuring you, that though I have been rather dilatory, I have not neglected my appointment, nor has the condescension of your interference been thrown away."

He then bowed, shut the door, and ran off. Cecilia, though happy to understand by this speech that he was actually restored to his family, was sorry at these repeated intrusions in the presence of Mr Delvile, who was now the only one that remained.

She expected every instant that he would ring for his chair, which he kept in waiting; but, after a pause of some continuance, to her equal surprise and disturbance, he made the following speech. "As it is probable I am now for the last time alone with you, ma'am, and as it is certain we shall meet no more upon business, I cannot, in justice to my own character, and to the respect I retain for the memory of the Dean, your uncle, take a final leave of the office with which he was pleased to invest me, without first fulfilling my own ideas of the duty it requires from me, by giving you some counsel relating to your future establishment."

This was not a preface much to enliven Cecilia; it prepared her for such speeches as she was least willing to hear, and gave to her the mixt and painful sensation of spirits depressed, with pride alarmed.

"My numerous engagements," he continued, "and the appropriation of my time, already settled, to their various claims, must make me brief in what I have to represent, and somewhat, perhaps, abrupt in coming to the purpose. But that you will excuse."

Cecilia disdained to humour this arrogance by any compliments or concessions: she was silent, therefore; and when they were both seated, he went on.

"You are now at a time of life when it is natural for young women to wish for some connection: and the largeness of your fortune will remove from you such difficulties as prove bars to the pretensions, in this expensive age, of those who possess not such advantages. It would have been some pleasure to me, while I yet considered you as my Ward, to have seen you properly disposed of: but as that time is past, I can only give you some general advice, which you may follow or neglect as you think fit. By giving it, I shall satisfy myself; for the rest, I am not responsible."

He paused; but Cecilia felt less and less inclination to make use of the opportunity by speaking in her turn.

"Yet though, as I just now hinted, young women of large fortunes may have little trouble in finding themselves establishments, they ought not, therefore, to trifle when proper ones are in their power, nor to suppose themselves equal to any they may chance to desire."

Cecilia coloured high at this pointed reprehension; but feeling her disgust every moment encrease, determined to sustain herself with dignity, and at least not suffer him to perceive the triumph of his ostentation and rudeness.

"The proposals," he continued, "of the Earl of Ernolf had always my approbation; it was certainly an ill-judged thing to neglect such an opportunity of being honourably settled. The clause of the name was, to

him, immaterial; since his own name, half a century ago was unheard of, and since he is himself only known by his title. He is still, however, I *have authority* to acquaint you, perfectly well disposed to renew his application to you."

"I *am sorry*, Sir," *said Cecilia coldly*, "*to hear* it."

"You have, perhaps, some other better offer in view?"

"No, Sir," cried she, with spirit, "nor even in desire."

"Am I, then, to infer that some inferior offer has more chance of your approbation?"

"There is no reason, Sir, to infer any thing; I am content with my actual situation, and have, at present, neither prospect nor intention of changing it."

"I perceive, but without surprise, your unwillingness to discuss the subject; nor do I mean to press it: I shall merely offer to your consideration one caution, and then relieve you from my presence. Young women of ample fortunes, who are early independent, are sometimes apt to presume they may do every thing with impunity; but they are mistaken; they are as liable to censure as those who are wholly unprovided for."

"I hope, Sir," said Cecilia, staring, "this at least *is a caution rather drawn from my situation than my* behaviour?"

"I mean not, ma'am, narrowly to go into, or investigate the subject; what I have said you may make your own use of; I have only to observe further, that when young women, at your time of life, are at all negligent of so nice a thing as reputation, they commonly live to repent it."

He then arose to go, but Cecilia, not more offended than amazed, said, "I must beg, Sir, you will explain yourself!"

"Certainly this matter," he answered, "must be immaterial to *me*: yet, as I have once been your guardian by the nomination of the Dean your uncle, I cannot forbear making an effort towards preventing any indiscretion: and frequent visits to a young man——"

"Good God! Sir," interrupted Cecilia, "what is it you mean?"

"It can certainly, as I said before, be nothing to *me*, though I should be glad to see you in better hands: but I cannot suppose you have been led to take such steps without some serious plan; and I would advise you, without loss of time, to think better of what you are about."

"Should I think, Sir, to eternity," cried Cecilia, "I could never conjecture what you mean!"

"You may not chuse," said he, proudly, "to understand me; but I have done. If it had been in my power to have interfered in your service with my Lord Derford, notwithstanding my reluctance to being involved in any fresh employment, I should have made a point of not refusing it: but this young man is nobody,—a very imprudent connection—"

"What young man, Sir?"

"Nay, I know nothing of him! it is by no means likely I should: but as I had already been informed of your attention to him, the corroborating incidents of my servant's following you to his house, his friend's seeking him at yours, and his own waiting upon you this morning; were not well calculated to make me withdraw my credence to it."

"Is it, then, Mr Belfield, Sir, concerning whom you draw these inferences, from circumstances the most accidental and unmeaning?"

"It is by no means my practice," cried he, haughtily, and with evident marks of high displeasure at this speech, "to believe any thing lightly, or without even unques-

tionable authority; what once, therefore, I have credited, I do not often find erroneous. Mistake not, however, what I have said into supposing I have any objection to your marrying; on the contrary, it had been for the honour of my family had you been married a year ago: I should not then have suffered the degradation of seeing a son of the first expectations in the kingdom upon the point of renouncing his birth, nor a woman of the first distinction ruined in her health, and broken for ever in her constitution."

The emotions of Cecilia at this speech were too powerful for concealment; her colour varied, now reddening with indignation, now turning pale with apprehension; she arose, she trembled and sat down, she arose again, but not knowing what to say or what to do, again sat down."

Mr Delvile then, making a stiff bow, wished her good morning.

"Go not so, Sir!" cried she, in faltering accents; "let me at least convince you of the mistake with regard to Mr Belfield—"

"My mistakes, ma'am," said he, with a contemptuous smile, "are perhaps not easily convicted: and I may possibly labour under others that would give you no less trouble: it may therefore be better to avoid any further disquisition."

"No, not better," answered she, again recovering her courage from this fresh provocation; "I fear no disquisition; on the contrary, it is my interest to solicit one."

"This intrepidity in a young woman," said he, ironically, "is certainly very commendable; and doubtless, as you are your own mistress, your having run out great part of your fortune, is nothing beyond what you have a right to do."

"Me!" cried Cecilia, astonished, "run out great part of my fortune!"

"Perhaps that is another *mistake!* I have not often been so unfortunate; and you are not, then, in debt?"

"In debt, Sir?"

"Nay, I have no intention to inquire into your affairs. Good morning to you, ma'am."

"I beg, I entreat, Sir, that you will stop!—make me, at least, understand what you mean, whether you deign to hear my justification or not."

"O, I am mistaken, it seems! misinformed, deceived; and you have neither spent more than you have received, nor taken up money of Jews? your minority has been clear of debts? and your fortune, now you are of age, will be free from incumbrances?"

Cecilia, who now began to understand him, eagerly answered, "do you mean, Sir, the money which I took up last spring?"

"O no; by no means, I conceive the whole to be a *mistake!*"

And he went to the door.

"Hear me but a moment, Sir!" cried she hastily, following him; "since you know of that transaction, do not refuse to listen to its occasion; I took up the money for Mr Harrel; it was all, and solely for him."

"For Mr Harrel, was it?" said he, with an air of supercilious incredulity; "that was rather an unlucky step. Your servant, ma'am."

And he opened the door.

"You will not hear me, then? you will not credit me?" cried she in the cruellest agitation.

"Some other time, ma'am; at present my avocations are too numerous to permit me."

And again, stiffly bowing, he called to his servants, who were waiting in the hall, and put himself into his chair.

Chapter 6.

A SUSPICION.

CECILIA was now left in a state of perturbation that was hardly to be endured. The contempt with which she had been treated during the whole visit was nothing short of insult, but the accusations with which it was concluded did not more irritate than astonish her.

That some strange prejudice had been taken against her, even more than belonged to her connection with young Delvile, the message brought her by Dr Lyster had given her reason to suppose: what that prejudice was she now knew, though how excited she was still ignorant; but she found Mr Delvile had been informed she had taken up money of a Jew, without having heard it was for Mr Harrel, and that he had been acquainted with her visits in Portland-street, without seeming to know Mr Belfield had a sister. Two charges such as these, so serious in their nature, and so destructive of her character, filled her with horror and consternation, and even somewhat served to palliate his illiberal and injurious behaviour.

But how reports thus false and thus disgraceful should be raised, and by what dark work of slander and malignity they had been spread, remained a doubt inexplicable. They could not, she was certain, be the mere rumour of chance, since in both the assertions there was some foundation of truth, however cruelly perverted, or basely over-charged.

This led her to consider how few people there were not only who had interest, but who had power to propagate such calumnies; even her acquaintance with the Belfields she remembered not ever mentioning, for she knew none of their friends, and none of her own knew

them. How, then, should it be circulated, that she "visited often at the house?" however be invented that it was from her "attention to the young man?" Henrietta, she was sure, was too good and too innocent to be guilty of such perfidy; and the young man himself had always shewn a modesty and propriety that manifested his total freedom from the vanity of such a suspicion, and an elevation of sentiment that would have taught him to scorn the boast, even if he believed the partiality.

The mother, however, had neither been so modest nor so rational; she had openly avowed her opinion that Cecilia was in love with her son; and as that son, by never offering himself, had never been refused, her opinion had received no check of sufficient force, for a mind so gross and literal, to change it.

This part, therefore, of the charge she gave to Mrs Belfield, whose officious and loquacious forwardness she concluded had induced her to narrate her suspicions, till, step by step, they had reached Mr Delvile.

But though able, by the probability of this conjecture, to account for the report concerning Belfield, the whole affair of the debt remained a difficulty not to be solved. Mr Harrel, his wife, Mr Arnott, the Jew and Mr Monckton, were the only persons to whom the transaction was known; and though from five, a secret, in the course of so many months, might easily be supposed likely to transpire, those five were so particularly bound to silence, not only for her interest but their own, that it was not unreasonable to believe it as safe among them all, as if solely consigned to one. For herself, she had revealed it to no creature but Mr Monckton; not even to Delvile; though, upon her consenting to marry him, he had an undoubted right to be acquainted with the true state of her affairs; but such had been the hurry, distress, confusion and irresolution

of her mind at that period, that this whole circumstance had been driven from it entirely, and she had, since, frequently blamed herself for such want of recollection. Mr Harrel, for a thousand reasons, she was certain had never named it; and had the communication come from his widow or from Mr Arnott, the motives would have been related as well as the debt, and she had been spared the reproach of contracting it for purposes of her own extravagance. The Jew, indeed, was, to her, under no obligation of secrecy, but he had an obligation far more binding,—he was tied to himself.

A suspicion now arose in her mind which made it thrill with horror; "good God! she exclaimed, can Mr Monckton——"

She stopt, even to herself;—she checked the idea;—she drove it hastily from her;—she was certain it was false and cruel;—she hated herself for having started it.

"No," cried she, "he is my friend, the confirmed friend of many years, my well-wisher from childhood, my zealous counsellor and assistant almost from my birth to this hour:—such perfidy from him would not even be human!"

Yet still her perplexity was undiminished; the affair was undoubtedly known, and it only could be known by the treachery of some one entrusted with it: and however earnestly her generosity combated her rising suspicions, she could not wholly quell them; and Mr Monckton's strange aversion to the Delviles, his earnestness to break off her connexion with them, occurred to her remembrance, and haunted her perforce with surmises to his disadvantage.

That gentleman, when he came home, found her in this comfortless and fluctuating state, endeavouring to form conjectures upon what had happened, yet unable to succeed, but by suggestions which one moment

excited her abhorrence of him, and the next of herself.

He enquired, with his usual appearance of easy friendliness, into what had passed with her two guardians, and how she had settled her affairs. She answered without hesitation all his questions, but her manner was cold and reserved, though her communication was frank.

This was not unheeded by Mr Monckton, who, after a short time, begged to know if any thing had disturbed her.

Cecilia, ashamed of her doubts, though unable to get rid of them, then endeavoured to brighten up, and changed the subject to the difficulties she had had to encounter from the obstinacy of Mr Briggs.

Mr Monckton for a while humoured this evasion; but when, by her own exertion, her solemnity began to wear off, he repeated his interrogatory, and would not be satisfied without an answer.

Cecilia, earnest that surmises so injurious should be removed, then honestly, but without comments, related the scene which had just past between Mr Delvile and herself.

No comments were, however, wanting to explain to Mr Monckton the change of her behaviour. "I see," he cried hastily, "what you cannot but suspect; and I will go myself to Mr Delvile, and insist upon his clearing me."

Cecilia, shocked to have thus betrayed what was passing within her, assured him his vindication required not such a step, and begged he would counsel her how to discover this treachery, without drawing from her concern at it a conclusion so offensive to himself.

He was evidently, however, and greatly disturbed; he declared his own wonder equal to hers how the affair had been betrayed, expressed the warmest indig-

nation at the malevolent insinuations against her conduct, and lamented with mingled acrimony and grief, that there should exist even the possibility of casting the odium of such villainy upon himself.

Cecilia, distressed, perplexed, and ashamed at once, again endeavoured to appease him, and though a lurking doubt obstinately clung to her understanding, the purity of her own principles, and the softness of her heart, pleaded strongly for his innocence, and urged her to detest her suspicion, though to conquer it they were unequal.

"It is true," said he, with an air ingenuous though mortified, "I dislike the Delviles, and have always disliked them; they appear to me a jealous, vindictive, and insolent race, and I should have thought I betrayed the faithful regard I professed for you, had I concealed my opinion when I saw you in danger of forming an alliance with them; I spoke to you, therefore, with honest zeal, thoughtless of any enmity I might draw upon myself; but though it was an interference from which I hoped, by preventing the connection, to contribute to your happiness, it was not with a design to stop it at the expence of your character,—a design black, horrible, and diabolic! a design which must be formed by a Dæmon, but which even a Dæmon could never, I think, execute!"

The candour of this speech, in which his aversion to the Delviles was openly acknowledged, and rationally justified, somewhat quieted the suspicions of Cecilia, which far more anxiously sought to be confuted than confirmed: she began, therefore, to conclude that some accident, inexplicable as unfortunate, had occasioned the partial discovery to Mr Delvile, by which her own goodness proved the source of her defamation: and though something still hung upon her mind that destroyed that firm confidence she had hitherto felt in the friendship of Mr Monckton, she held it utterly unjust

to condemn him without proof, which she was not more unable to procure, than to satisfy herself with any reason why so perfidiously he should calumniate her.

Comfortless, however, and tormented with conjectures equally vague and afflicting, she could only clear him to be lost in perplexity, she could only accuse him to be penetrated with horror. She endeavoured to suspend her judgment till time should develop the mystery, and only for the present sought to finish her business and leave London.

She renewed, therefore, again, the subject of Mr Briggs, and told him how vain had been her effort to settle with him. Mr Monckton instantly offered his services in assisting her, and the next morning they went together to his house, where, after an obstinate battle, they gained a complete victory: Mr Briggs gave up all his accounts, and, in a few days, by the active interference of Mr Monckton, her affairs were wholly taken out of his hands. He stormed, and prophesied all ill to Cecilia, but it was not to any purpose; he was so disagreeable to her, by his manners, and so unintelligible to her in matters of business, that she was happy to have done with him; even though, upon inspecting his accounts, they were all found clear and exact, and his desire to retain his power over her fortune, proved to have no other motive than a love of money so potent, that to manage it, even for another, gave him a satisfaction he knew not how to relinquish.

Mr Monckton, who, though a man of pleasure, understood business perfectly well, now instructed and directed her in making a general arrangement of her affairs. The estate which devolved to her from her uncle, and which was all in landed property, she continued to commit to the management of the steward who was employed in his life-time; and her own fortune from her father, which was all in the stocks,

she now diminished to nothing by selling out to pay Mr Monckton the principal and interest which she owed him, and by settling with her Bookseller.

While these matters were transacting, which, notwithstanding her eagerness to leave town, could not be brought into such a train as to permit her absence in less than a week, she passed her time chiefly alone. Her wishes all inclined her to bestow it upon Henrietta, but the late attack of Mr Delvile had frightened her from keeping up that connection, since however carefully she might confine it to the daughter, Mrs Belfield, she was certain, would impute it all to the son.

That attack rested upon her mind, in defiance of all her endeavours to banish it; the contempt with which it was made seemed intentionally offensive, as if he had been happy to derive from her supposed ill conduct, a right to triumph over as well as reject her. She concluded, also, that Delvile would be informed of these calumnies, yet she judged his generosity by her own, and was therefore convinced he would not credit them: but what chiefly at this time encreased her sadness and uneasiness, was the mention of Mrs Delvile's broken constitution and ruined health. She had always preserved for that lady the most affectionate respect, and could not consider herself as the cause of her sufferings, without feeling the utmost concern, however conscious she had not wilfully occasioned them.

Nor was this scene the only one by which her efforts to forget this family were defeated; her watchful monitor, Albany, failed not again to claim her promise; and though Mr Monckton earnestly exhorted her not to trust herself out with him, she preferred a little risk to the keenness of his reproaches, and the weather being good on the morning that he called, she consented to accompany him in his rambles: only charg-

ing her footman to follow where-ever they went, and not to fail enquiring for her if she stayed long out of his sight. These precautions were rather taken to satisfy Mr Monckton than herself, who, having now procured intelligence of the former disorder of his intellects, was fearful of some extravagance, and apprehensive for her safety.

He took her to a miserable house in a court leading into Piccadilly, where, up three pair of stairs, was a wretched woman ill in bed, while a large family of children were playing in the room.

"See here," cried he, "what human nature can endure! look at that poor wretch, distracted with torture, yet lying in all this noise! unable to stir in her bed, yet without any assistant! suffering the pangs of acute disease, yet wanting the necessaries of life!"

Cecilia went up to the bed-side, and enquired more particularly into the situation of the invalid; but finding she could hardly speak from pain, she sent for the woman of the house, who kept a Green Grocer's shop on the ground floor, and desired her to hire a nurse for her sick lodger, to call all the children down stairs, and to send for an apothecary, whose bill she promised to pay. She then gave her some money to get what necessaries might be wanted, and said she would come again in two days to see how they went on.

Albany, who listened to these directions with silent, yet eager attention, now clasped both his hands with a look of rapture, and exclaimed "Virtue yet lives,—and I have found her?"

Cecilia, proud of such praise, and ambitious to deserve it, chearfully said, "where, Sir, shall we go now?"

"Home;" answered he with an aspect the most benign; "I will not wear out thy pity by rendering woe familiar to it."

Cecilia, though at this moment more disposed for acts of charity than for business or for pleasure, remembered that her fortune however large was not unlimited, and would not press any further bounty for objects she knew not, certain that occasions and claimants, far beyond her ability of answering, would but too frequently arise among those with whom she was more connected, she therefore yielded herself to his direction, and returned to Soho-Square.

Again, however, he failed not to call at the time she had appointed for re-visiting the invalid, to whom, with *much gladness, he conducted her.*

The poor woman, whose disease was a rheumatic fever, was already much better; she had been attended by an apothecary who had given her some alleviating medicine; she had a nurse at her bedside, and the room being cleared of the children, she had had the refreshment of some sleep.

She was now able to raise her head, and make her acknowledgments to her benefactress; but not a little was the surprise of Cecilia, when, upon looking in her face, she said, "Ah, madam, I have seen you before!"

Cecilia, who had not the smallest recollection of her, in return desired to know when, or where?

"When you were going to be married, madam, I was the Pew-Opener at ——— Church."

Cecilia started with secret horror, and involuntarily retreated from the bed; while Albany with a look of astonishment exclaimed, "Married!—why, then, is it unknown?"

"Ask me not!" cried she, hastily; "it is all a mistake."

"Poor thing!" cried he, "this, then, is the string thy nerves endure not to have touched! sooner will I expire than a breath of mine shall make it vibrate! Oh

sacred be thy sorrow, for thou canst melt at that of the indigent!"

Cecilia then made a few general enquiries, and heard that the poor woman, who was a widow, had been obliged to give up her office, from the frequent attacks which she suffered of the rheumatism; that she had received much assistance both from the Rector and the Curate of ——— Church, but her continual illness, with the largeness of her family, kept her distressed in spite of all help.

Cecilia promised to consider what she could do for her, and then giving her more money, returned to Lady Margaret's.

Albany, who found that the unfortunate recollection of the Pew-Opener had awakened in his young pupil a melancholy train of reflections, seemed now to compassionate the sadness which hitherto he had reproved, and walking silently by her side till she came to Soho-Square, said in accents of kindness, "Peace light upon thy head, and dissipate thy woes!" and left her.

"Ah when!" cried she to herself, "if thus they are to be revived for-ever!"

Mr Monckton, who observed that something had greatly affected her, now expostulated warmly against Albany and his wild schemes; "You trifle with your own happiness," he cried, "by witnessing these scenes of distress, and you will trifle away your fortune upon projects you can never fulfil: the very air in those miserable houses is unwholesome for you to breathe; you will soon be affected with some of the diseases to which you so uncautiously expose yourself, and while not half you give in charity will answer the purpose you wish, you will be plundered by cheats and sharpers till you have nothing left to bestow. You must be more considerate for yourself, and not thus governed by Albany, whose insanity is but partially cured, and whose projects

are so boundless, that the whole capital of the East India Company would not suffice to fulfil them."

Cecilia, though she liked not the severity of this remonstrance, acknowledged there was some truth in it, and promised to be discreet, and take the reins into her own hands.

There remained for her, however, no other satisfaction; and the path which had thus been pointed out to her, grew more and more alluring every step. Her old friends, the poor Hills, now occurred to her memory, and she determined to see herself in what manner they went on.

The scene which this enquiry presented to her, was by no means calculated to strengthen Mr Monckton's doctrine, for the prosperity in which she found this little family, amply rewarded the liberality she had shewn to it, and proved an irresistible encouragement to similar actions. Mrs Hill wept for joy in recounting how well she succeeded, and Cecilia, delighted by the power of giving such pleasure, forgot all cautions and promises in the generosity which she displayed. She paid Mrs Roberts the arrears that were due to her, she discharged all that was owing for the children who had been put to school, desired they might still be sent to it solely at her expense, and gave the mother a sum of money to be laid out in presents for them all.

To perform her promise with the Pew Opener was however more difficult; her ill health, and the extreme youth of her children making her utterly helpless: but these were not considerations for Cecilia to desert her, but rather motives for regarding her as more peculiarly an object of charity. She found she had once been a clear starcher, and was a tolerable plain work-woman; she resolved, therefore, to send her into the country, where she hoped to be able to get her some business, and knew that at least, she could help her, if unsuccess-

ful, and see that her children were brought up to useful employments. The woman herself was enchanted at the plan, and firmly persuaded the country air would restore her health. Cecilia told her only to wait till she was well enough to travel, and promised, in the mean time, to look out some little habitation for her. She then gave her money to pay her bills, and for her journey, and writing a full direction where she would hear of her at Bury, took leave of her till that time.

These magnificent donations and designs, being communicated to Albany, seemed a renovation to him of youth, spirit, and joy! while their effect upon Mr Monckton resembled an annihilation of all three! to see money thus sported away, which he had long considered as his own, to behold those sums which he had destined for his pleasures, thus lavishly bestowed upon beggars, excited a rage he could with difficulty conceal, and an uneasiness he could hardly endure; and he languished, he sickened for the time, when he might put a period to such romantic proceedings.

Such were the only occupations which interrupted the solitude of Cecilia, except those which were given to her by actual business; and the moment her affairs were in so much forwardness that they could be managed by letters, she prepared for returning into the country. She acquainted Lady Margaret and Mr Monckton with her design, and gave orders to her servants to be ready to set off the next day.

Mr Monckton made not any opposition, and refused himself the satisfaction of accompanying her: and Lady Margaret, whose purpose was now answered, and who wished to be in the country herself, determined to follow her.

Chapter vj.

A DISTURBANCE.

THIS matter being settled at breakfast, Cecilia, having but one day more to spend in London, knew not how to let it pass without taking leave of Henrietta, though she chose not again to expose herself to the forward insinuations of her mother; she sent her, therefore, a short note, begging to see her at Lady Margaret's, and acquainting her that the next day she was going out of town.

Henrietta returned the following answer.

To Miss Beverley.

Madam,—My mother is gone to market, and I must not go out without her leave; I have run to the door at every knock this whole week in hopes you were coming, and my heart has jumpt at every coach that has gone through the street. Dearest lady, why did you tell me you would come? I should not have thought of such a great honour if you had not put it in my head. And now I have got the use of a room where I can often be alone for two or three hours together. And so I shall this morning, if it was possible my dear Miss Beverley could come. But I don't mean to be teasing, and I would not be impertinent or encroaching for the world; but only the thing is I have a great deal to say to you, and if you was not so rich a lady, and so much above me, I am sure I should love you better than any body in the whole world, almost; and now I dare say I shan't see you at all; for it rains very hard, and my mother, I know, will be sadly angry if I ask to go in a coach. O dear! I don't know what I can do! for it will half break my heart, if my

dear Miss Beverley should go out of town, and I not see her!—I am, Madam, with the greatest respectfulness, your most humble servant,

HENRIETTA BLEFIELD.

This artless remonstrance, joined to the intelligence that she could see her alone, made Cecilia instantly order a chair, and go herself to Portland-street: for she found by this letter there was much doubt if she could otherwise see her, and the earnestness of Henrietta made her now not endure to disappoint her. "She has much," cried she, "to say to me, and I will no longer refuse to hear her; she shall unbosom to me her gentle heart, for we have now nothing to fear from each other. She promises herself pleasure from the communication, and doubtless it must be some relief to her. Oh were there any friendly bosom, in which I might myself confide!—happier Henrietta! less fearful of thy pride, less tenacious of thy dignity! thy sorrows at least seek the consolation of sympathy,—mine, alas! fettered by prudence, must fly it!"

She was shewn into the parlour, which she had the pleasure to find empty; and, in an instant, the warm-hearted Henrietta was in her arms, "This is sweet of you indeed," cried she, "for I did not know how to ask it, though it rains so hard I could not have walked to you, and I don't know what I should have done, if you had gone away and quite forgot me."

She then took her into the back parlour, which she said they had lately hired, and, as it was made but little use of, she had it almost entirely to herself.

There had passed a sad scene, she told her, at the meeting with her brother, though now they were a little more comfortable; yet, her mother, she was sure, would never be at rest till he got into some higher way of life; "And, indeed, I have some hopes," she con-

tinued, "that we shall be able by and bye to do something better for him; for he has got one friend in the *world, yet, thank God, and such a noble friend!*—indeed I believe he can do whatever he pleases for him,—that is I mean I believe if he was to ask any thing for him, there's nobody would deny him. And this is what I wanted to talk to you about."—

Cecilia, who doubted not but she meant Delvile, scarce knew how to press the subject, though she came with no other view: Henrietta, however, too eager to want solicitation, went on.

"But the question is whether we shall be able to prevail upon my brother to accept any thing, for he grows more and more unwilling to be obliged, and the reason is, that being poor, he is afraid, I believe, people should think he wants to beg of them: though if they knew him as well as I do, they would not long think that, for I am sure he would a great deal rather be starved to death. But indeed, to say the truth, I am afraid he has been sadly to blame in this affair, and quarrelled when there was no need to be affronted; for I have seen a gentleman who knows a great deal better than my brother what people should do, and he says he took every thing wrong that was done, all the time he was at Lord Vannelt's."

"And how does this gentleman know it?"

"O because he went himself to enquire about it; for he knows Lord Vannelt very well, and it was by his means my brother came acquainted with him. And this gentleman would not have wished my brother to be used ill any more than I should myself, so I am sure I may believe what he says. But my poor brother, not being a lord himself, thought every body meant to be rude to him, and because he knew he was poor, he suspected they all behaved disrespectfully to him. But this gentleman gave me his word that every body liked

him and esteemed him, and if he would not have been so suspicious, they would all have done any thing for him in the world."

"You know this gentleman very well, then?"

"O no, madam!" she answered hastily, "I don't know him at all! he only comes here to see my brother; it would be very impertinent for me to call him an acquaintance of mine."

"Was it before your brother, then, he held this conversation with you?"

"O no, my brother would have been affronted with him, too, if he had! but he called here to enquire for him at the time when he was lost to us, and my mother quite went down upon her knees to him to beg him to go to Lord Vannelt's, and make excuses for him, if he had not behaved properly: but if my brother was to know this, he would hardly speak to her again! so when this gentleman came next, I begged him not to mention it, for my mother happened to be out, and so I saw him alone."

"And did he stay with you long?"

"No, ma'am, a very short time indeed; but I asked him questions all the while, and kept him as long as I could, that I might hear all he had to say about my brother."

"Have you never seen him since?"

"No, ma'am, not once! I suppose he does not *know my brother is come back to us. Perhaps when* he does, he will call."

"Do you wish him to call?"

"Me?" cried she, blushing, "*a little;—sometimes* I do;—for my brother's sake."

"For your brother's sake! Ah my dear Henrietta! ——but tell me,—or *don't* tell me if you had rather not,—did I not once see you kissing a letter? perhaps it was from this same noble friend?"

"It was not a letter, madam," said she, looking down, "it was only the cover of one to my brother."

"The cover of a letter only!—and that to your brother!——is it possible you could so much value it?"

"Ah madam! *You*, who are always used to the good and the wise, who see no other sort of people but those in high life, *you* can have no notion how they strike those that they are new to!——but I who see them seldom, and who live with people so very unlike them—Oh you cannot guess how sweet to *me* is every thing that belongs to them! whatever has but once been touched by their hands, I should like to lock up, and keep for ever! though if I was used to them, as you are, perhaps I might think less of them."

Alas! thought Cecilia, who by *them* knew she only meant *him*, little indeed would further intimacy protect you!

"We are all over-ready," continued Henrietta, "to blame others, and that is the way I have been doing all this time myself; but I don't blame my poor brother now for living so with the great as I used to do, for now I have seen a little more of the world, I don't wonder any longer at his behaviour: for I know how it is, and I see that those who have had good educations, and kept great company, and mixed with the world,—O it is another thing!—they seem quite a different species!—they are so gentle, so soft-mannered! nothing comes from them but what is meant to oblige! they seem as if they only lived to give pleasure to other people, and as if they never thought at all of themselves!"

"Ah Henrietta!" said Cecilia, shaking her head, "you have caught the enthusiasm of your brother, though you so long condemned it! Oh have a care lest, like him also, you find it as pernicious as it is alluring!"

"There is no danger for *me*, madam," answered she,

"for the people I so much admire are quite out of my reach. I hardly ever even see them; and perhaps it may so happen I may see them no more!"

"The people?" said Cecilia, smiling, "are there, then, many you so much distinguish?"

"Oh no indeed!" cried she, eagerly, "there is only one! there *can* be—I mean there are only a few—" she checked herself, and stopt.

"Whoever you admire," cried Cecilia, "your admiration cannot but honour: yet indulge it not too far, lest it should wander from your heart to your peace, and make you wretched for life."

"Ah madam!—I see you know who is the particular person I was thinking of! but indeed you are quite mistaken if you suppose any thing bad of me!"

"Bad of you!" cried Cecilia, embracing her, "I scarce think so well of any one!"

"But I mean, madam, if you think I forget he is so much above me. But indeed I never do; for I only admire him for his goodness to my brother, and never think of him at all, but just by way of comparing him, sometimes, to the other people that I see, because he makes me hate them so, that I wish I was never to see them again."

"His acquaintance, then," said Cecilia, "has done you but an ill office, and happy it would be for you could you forget you had ever made it."

"O, I shall never do that! for the more I think of him, the more I am out of humour with every body else! O Miss Beverley! we have a sad acquaintance indeed! I'm sure I don't wonder my brother was so ashamed of them. They are all so rude, and so free, and put one so out of countenance,—O how different is this person you are thinking of! he would not distress any body, or make one ashamed for all the world! *You* only are like him! always gentle, always obliging!

——sometimes I think you must be his sister—once, too, I heard—but that was contradicted."

A deep sigh escaped Cecilia at this speech; she guessed too well what she might have heard, and she knew too well how it might be contradicted.

"Surely, *you* cannot be unhappy, Miss Beverley!" said Henrietta, with a look of mingled surprise and concern.

"I have much, I own," cried Cecilia, assuming more chearfulness, "to be thankful for, and I endeavour not to forget it."

"O how often do I think," cried Henrietta, "that you, madam, are the happiest person in the world! with every thing at your own disposal,—with every body in love with you, with all the money that you can wish for, and so much sweetness that nobody can envy you it! with power to keep just what company you please, and every body proud to be one of the number!—Oh if I could chuse who I would be, I should sooner say Miss Beverley than any princess in the world!"

Ah, thought Cecilia, if such is my situation,—how cruel that by one dreadful blow all its happiness should be thrown away!

"Were I a rich lady, like you," continued Henrietta, "and quite in my own power, then, indeed, I might soon think of nothing but those people that I admire! and that makes me often wonder that *you*, madam, who are just such another as himself——but then, indeed, you may see so many of the same sort, that just this one may not so much strike you: and for that reason I hope with all my heart that he will never be married as long as he lives, for as he must take some lady in just such high life as his own, I should always be afraid that she would never love him as she ought to do!"

He need not now be single, thought Cecilia, were that all he had cause to apprehend!

"I often think," added Henrietta, "that the rich would be as much happier for marrying the poor, as the poor for marrying the rich, for then they would take somebody that would try to deserve their kindness, and now they only take those that know they have a right to it. *Often and often have I thought so about this* very gentleman! and sometimes when I have been in his company, and seen his civility and his sweetness, I have fancied I was rich and grand myself, and it has quite gone out of my head that I was nothing but poor Henrietta Belfield!"

"Did he, then," cried Cecilia a little alarmed, "ever seek to ingratiate himself into your favour?"

"No, never! but when treated with so much softness, *'tis hard always to remember one's meanness!* You, madam, have no notion of that task: no more had I myself till lately, for I cared not who was high, nor who was low: but now, indeed, I must own I have some times wished myself richer! yet he assumes so little, that at other times, I have almost forgot all distance between us, and even thought——Oh foolish thought!——

"Tell it, sweet Henrietta, however!"

"*I will tell you, madam, every thing! for my heart* has been bursting to open itself, and nobody have I dared trust. I have thought, then, I have sometimes thought,—my true affection, my faithful fondness, my glad obedience,—might make him, if he did but know them, happier in me than in a greater lady!"

"Indeed," cried Cecilia, extremely affected by this plaintive tenderness, "I believe it!—and were I him, I could not, I think, hesitate a moment in my *choice!*"

Henrietta now, hearing her mother coming in, made a sign to her to be silent; but Mrs Belfield had not been an instant in the passage, before a thundering

knocking at the street-door occasioned it to be instantly re-opened. A servant then enquired if Mrs Belfield was at home, and being answered by herself in the affirmative, a chair was brought into the house.

But what was the astonishment of Cecilia, when, in another moment, she heard from the next parlour the voice of Mr Delvile senior, saying, "Your servant, ma'am; Mrs Belfield, I presume?"

There was no occasion, now, to make a sign to her of silence, for her own amazement was sufficient to deprive her of speech.

"Yes, Sir," answered Mrs Belfield; "but I suppose, Sir, you are some gentleman to my son."

"No, madam," he returned, "my business is with yourself."

Cecilia now recovering from her surprise, determined to hasten unnoticed out of the house, well knowing that to be seen in it would be regarded as a confirmation of all that he had asserted. She whispered, therefore, to Henrietta, that she must instantly run away, but, upon softly opening the door leading to the passage, she found Mr Delvile's chairmen, and a footman there in waiting.

She closed it again, irresolute what to do: but after a little deliberation, she concluded to out-stay him, as she was known to all his servants, who would not fail to mention seeing her; and a retreat so private was worse than any other risk. A chair was also in waiting for herself, but it was a hackney one, and she could not be known by it; and her footman she had fortunately dismissed, as he had business to transact for her journey next day.

Mean-while the thinness of the partition between the two parlours made her hearing every word that was said unavoidable.

"I am sure, Sir, I shall be very willing to oblige

you," Mrs Belfield answered; "but pray, Sir, what's your name?"

"My name, ma'am," he replied, in a rather elevated voice, "I am seldom obliged to announce myself; nor is there any present necessity I should make it known. It is sufficient I assure you, you are speaking to no very common person, and probably to one you will have little chance to meet with again."

"But how can I tell your business, Sir, if I don't so much as know your name?"

"My business, madam, I mean to tell myself; your affair is only to hear it. I have some questions, indeed, to ask, which I must trouble you to answer, but they will sufficiently explain themselves to prevent any difficulty upon your part. There is no need, therefore, of any introductory ceremonial."

"Well, Sir," said Mrs Belfield, wholly insensible of this ambiguous greatness, "if you mean to make your name a secret."

"Few names, I believe, ma'am," cried he, haughtily, "have less the advantage of secrecy than mine! on the contrary, this is but one among a very few houses in this town to which my person would not immediately announce it. That, however, is immaterial—and you will be so good as to rest satisfied with my assurances, that the person with whom you are now conversing, will prove no disgrace to your character."

Mrs Belfield, overpowered, though hardly knowing with what, only said *he was very welcome*, and begged him to sit down.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he answered, "My business is but of a moment, and my avocations are too many to suffer my infringing that time. You say you have a son; I have heard of him, also, somewhere before; pray will you give me leave to enquire——I don't mean to go deep into the matter,—but particular family occurrences

make it essential for me to know,—whether there is not a young person of rather a capital fortune, to whom he is supposed to make proposals?"

"Lack-a-day, no, Sir!" answered Mrs Belfield, to the infinite relief of Cecilia, who instantly concluded this question referred to herself.

"I beg your pardon, then; good morning to you, ma'am," said Mr Delvile, in a tone that spoke his disappointment; but added "And there is no such young person, you say, who favours his pretensions?"

"Dear Sir," cried she, "why there's nobody he'll so much as put the question to! there's a young lady at this very time, a great fortune, that has as much a mind to him, I tell him, as any man need desire to see; but there's no making him think it! though he has been brought up at the university, and knows more about all the things, or as much, as any body in the king's dominions."

"O, then," cried Mr Delvile, in a voice of far more complacency, "it is not on the side of the young woman that the difficulty seems to rest?"

"Lord, no, Sir! he might have had her again and again only for asking! She came after him ever so often; but being brought up, as I said, at the university, he thought he knew better than me, and so my preaching was all as good as lost upon him."

The consternation of Cecilia at these speeches could by nothing be equalled but by the shame of Henrietta, who, though she knew not to whom her mother made them, felt all the disgrace and the shock of them herself.

"I suppose, Sir," continued Mrs Belfield, "you know my son?"

"No, ma'am, my acquaintance is——not very universal."

"Then, Sir, you are no judge how well he might

make his own terms. And as to this young lady, she found him out, Sir, when not one of his own natural friends could tell where in the world he was gone! She was the first, Sir, to come and tell me news of him though I was his own mother! Love, Sir, is prodigious for quickness! it can see, I sometimes think, through bricks and mortar. Yet all this would not do, he was so obstinate not to take the hint!"

Cecilia now felt so extremely provoked, she was upon the point of bursting in upon them to make her own vindication; but as her passions, though they tried her reason never conquered it, she restrained herself by considering that to issue forth from a room in that house, would do more towards strengthening what was thus boldly asserted, than all her protestations could have chance to destroy.

"And as to young ladies themselves," continued Mrs Belfield, "they know no more how to make their minds known than a baby does: so I suppose he'll shilly shally till somebody else will cry snap, and take her. It is but a little while ago that it was all the report she was to have young Mr Delvile, one of her guardian's sons."

"I am sorry report was so impertinent," cried Mr Delvile, with much displeasure; "young Mr Delvile is not to be disposed of with so little ceremony; he knows better what is due to his family."

Cecilia here blushed from indignation, and Henrietta sighed from despondency.

"Lord, Sir," answered Mrs Belfield, "what should his family do better? I never heard they were any so rich, and I dare say the old gentleman, being her guardian, took care to put his son enough in her way, however it came about that they did not make a match of it: for as to old Mr Delvile, all the world says——"

"All the world takes a very great liberty," angrily

interrupted Mr Delvile, "in saying any thing about him: and you will excuse my informing you that a person of his rank and consideration, is not lightly to be mentioned upon every little occasion that occurs."

"Lord, Sir," cried Mrs Belfield, somewhat surprised at this unexpected prohibition, "I don't care for my part if I never mention the old gentleman's name again! I never heard any good of him in my life, for they say he's as proud as Lucifer, and nobody knows what it's of, for they say—"

"*They* say?" cried he, firing with rage, "and who are *they?* be so good as inform me that?"

"Lord, every body, Sir! it's his common character."

"Then every body is extremely indecent," speaking very loud, "to pay no more respect to one of the first families in England. It is a licentiousness that ought by no means to be suffered with impunity."

Here, the street-door being kept open by the servants in waiting, a new step was heard in the passage, which Henrietta immediately knowing, turned, with uplifted hands to Cecilia, and whispered, "How unlucky! it's my brother! I thought he would not have returned till night!"

"Surely he will not come in here?" re-whispered Cecilia.

But, at the same moment, he opened the door, and entered the room. He was immediately beginning an apology, and starting back, but Henrietta catching him by the arm, told him in a low voice, that she had made use of his room because she had thought him engaged for the day, but begged him to keep still and quiet, as the least noise would discover them.

Belfield then stopt; but the embarrassment of Cecilia was extreme; to find herself in his room after the speeches she had heard from his mother, and to continue

with him in it by connivance, when she knew she had been represented as quite at his service, distressed and provoked her immeasurably; and she felt very angry with Henrietta for not sooner informing her whose apartment she had borrowed. Yet now to remove, and to be seen, was not to be thought of; she kept, therefore, fixed to her seat, though changing colour every moment from the variety of her emotions.

During this painful interruption she lost Mrs Belfield's next answer, and another speech or two from Mr Delvile, to whose own passion and loudness was owing Belfield's entering his room unheard: but the next voice that called their attention was that of Mr Hobson, who just then walked into the parlour.

"Why what's to do here?" cried he, facetiously, "nothing but chairs and livery servants! Why, ma'am, what is this your rout day? Sir your most humble servant. I ask pardon, but I did not know you at first. But come, suppose we were all to sit down? Sitting's as cheap as standing, and what I say is this; when a man's tired, it's more agreeable."

"Have you any thing further, ma'am," said Mr Delvile, with great solemnity, "to communicate to me?"

"No, Sir," said Mrs Belfield, rather angrily, "it's no business of mine to be communicating myself to a gentleman that I don't know the name of. Why, Mr Hobson, how come you to know the gentleman?"

"To know *me!*" repeated Mr Delvile, scornfully.

"Why I can't say much, ma'am," answered Mr Hobson, "as to my knowing the gentleman, being I have been in his company but once; and what I say is, to know a person if one leaves but a quart in a hogshead, it's two pints too much. That's my notion. But, Sir, that was but an ungain business at 'Squire Monckton's t'other morning. Every body was no-how, as one

may say. But, Sir, if I may be so free, pray what is your private opinion of that old gentleman that talked so much out of the way?"

"My private opinion, Sir?"

"Yes, Sir; I mean if it's no secret, for as to a secret, I hold it's what no man has a right to enquire into, being of its own nature it's a thing not to be told. Now as to what I think myself, my doctrine is this; I am quite of the old gentleman's mind about some things, and about others I hold him to be quite wide of the mark. But as to talking in such a whisky frisky manner that nobody can understand him, why its tantamount to not talking at all, being he might as well hold his tongue. That's what *I* say. And then as to that other article, of abusing a person for not giving away all his lawful gains to every cripple in the streets, just because he happens to have but one leg, or one eye, or some such matter, why it's knowing nothing of business! it's what *I* call talking at random."

"When you have finished, Sir," said Mr Delvile, "you will be so good to let me know."

"I don't mean to intrude, Sir; that's not my way, so if you are upon business——"

"What else, Sir, could you suppose brought me hither? However, I by no means purpose any discussion. I have only a few words more to say to this gentlewoman, and as my time is not wholly inconsequential, I should not be sorry to have an early opportunity of being heard."

"I shall leave you with the lady directly, Sir; for I know business better than to interrupt it: but seeing chairs in the entry, my notion was I should see ladies in the parlour, not much thinking of gentlemen's going about in that manner, being I never did it myself. But I have nothing to offer against that; let every man have his own way; that's what *I* say. Only just let

me ask the lady before I go, what's the meaning of my seeing two chairs in the entry, and only a person for one in the parlour? The gentleman, I suppose, did not come in *both*; ha! ha! ha!"

"Why now you put me in mind," said Mrs Belfield, "I saw a chair as soon as I come in; and I was just going to say who's here, when this gentleman's coming put it out of my head."

"Why this is what I call Hocus Pocus work!" said Mr Hobson; "but I shall make free to ask the chairmen who they are waiting for."

Mrs Belfield, however, anticipated him; for running into the passage, she angrily called out, "What do you do here, Misters? do you only come to be out of the rain? I'll have no stand made of my entry, I can tell you!"

"Why we are waiting for the lady," cried one of them.

"Waiting for a fiddlestick!" said Mrs Belfield; "here's no lady here, nor no company; so if you think I'll have my entry filled up by two hulking fellows for nothing, I shall shew you the difference. *One's dirt enough of one's own, without taking people* out of the streets to help one. Who do you think's to clean after you?"

"That's no business of ours; the lady bid us wait," answered the man.

Cecilia at this dispute could with pleasure have cast herself out of the window to avoid being discovered; but all plan of escape was too late; Mrs Belfield called aloud for her daughter, and then, returning to the front parlour, said, "I'll soon know if there's company come to my house without my knowing it!" and opened a door leading to the next room!

Cecilia, who had hitherto sat fixed to her chair, now hastily arose, but in a confusion too cruel for speech:

Belfield, wondering even at his own situation, and equally concerned and surprised at her evident distress, had himself the feeling of a culprit, though without the least knowledge of any cause: and Henrietta, terrified at the prospect of her mother's anger, retreated as much as possible out of sight.

Such was the situation of the discovered, abashed, perplexed, and embarrassed! while that of the discoverers, far different, was bold, delighted, and triumphant!

"So!" cried Mrs Belfield, "why here's Miss Beverley!—in my son's back room!" winking at Mr Delvile.

"Why here's a lady, sure enough!" said Mr Hobson, "and just where she should be, and that is with a gentleman. Ha! ha! that's the right way, according to my notion! that's the true maxim for living agreeable."

"I came to see Miss Belfield," cried Cecilia, endeavouring, but vainly, to speak with composure, "and she brought me into this room."

"I am but this moment," cried Belfield, with eagerness, "returned home; and unfortunately broke into the room, from total ignorance of the honour which Miss Beverley did my sister."

These speeches, though both literally true, sounded, in the circumstances which brought them out, so much as mere excuses, that while Mr Delvile haughtily marked his incredulity by a motion of his chin, Mrs Belfield continued winking at him most significantly, and Mr Hobson, with still less ceremony, laughed aloud.

"I have nothing more, ma'am," said Mr Delvile to Mrs Belfield, "to enquire, for the few doubts with which I came to this house are now entirely satisfied. Good morning to you, ma'am."

"Give me leave, Sir," said Cecilia, advancing with more spirit, "to explain, in presence of those who can best testify my veracity, the real circumstances—"

"I would by no means occasion you such unnecessary trouble, ma'am," answered he, with an air at once exulting and pompous, "the situation in which I see you abundantly satisfies my curiosity, and saves me from the apprehension I was under of being again convicted of a *mistake!*"

He then made her a stiff bow, and went to his chair.

Cecilia, colouring deeply at this contemptuous treatment, coldly took leave of Henrietta, and courtsying to Mrs Belfield, hastened into the passage, to get into her own.

Henrietta was too much intimidated to speak, and Belfield was too delicate to follow her; Mr Hobson only said "The young lady seems quite dashed;" but Mrs Belfield pursued her with entreaties she would stay.

She was too angry, however, to make any answer but by a distant bow of the head, and left the house with a resolution little short of a vow never again to enter it.

Her reflections upon this unfortunate visit were bitter beyond measure; the situation in which she had been surprised,—clandestinely concealed with only Belfield and his sister,—joined to the positive assertions of her partiality for him made by his mother, could not, to Mr Delvile, but appear marks irrefragable that his charge in his former conversation was rather mild than overstrained, and that the connection he had mentioned, for whatever motives denied, was incontestably formed.

The apparent conviction of this part of the accusation, might also authorise, to one but too happy in believing ill of her, an implicit faith in that which

regarded her having run out her fortune. His determination not to hear her shewed the inflexibility of his character; and it was evident, notwithstanding his parading pretensions of wishing her welfare, that his inordinate pride was inflamed, at the very supposition he could be mistaken or deceived for a moment.

Even Delvile himself, if gone abroad, might now hear this account with exaggerations that would baffle all his confidence: his mother, too, greatly as she esteemed and loved her, might have the matter so represented as to stagger her good opinion;——these were thoughts the most afflicting she could harbour, though their probability was such that to banish them was impossible.

To apply again to Mr Delvile to hear her vindication, was to subject herself to insolence, and almost to court indignity. She disdained even to write to him, since his behaviour called for resentment, not concession; and such an eagerness to be heard, in opposition to all discouragement, would be practising a meanness that would almost merit repulsion.

Her first inclination was to write to Mrs Delvile, but what now, to her, was either her defence or accusation? She had solemnly renounced all further intercourse with her, she had declared against writing again, and prohibited her letters: and, therefore, after much fluctuation of opinion, her delicacy concurred with her judgment, to conclude it would be most proper, in a situation so intricate, to leave the matter to chance, and commit her character to time.

In the evening, while she was at tea with Lady Margaret and Miss Bennet, she was suddenly called out to speak to a young woman; and found, to her great surprise, she was no other than Henrietta.

"*Ah madam!*" *she cried*, "*how angrily did you go away this morning!* it has made me miserable ever

since, and if you go out of town without forgiving me, I shall fret myself quite ill! my mother is gone out to tea, and I have run here all alone, and in the dark, and in the wet, to beg and pray you will forgive me, for else I don't know what I shall do!"

"Sweet, gentle girl!" cried Cecilia, affectionately embracing her, "if you had excited all the anger I am capable of feeling, such softness as this would banish it, and make me love you more than ever!"

Henrietta then said, in her excuse, that she had thought herself quite sure of her brother's absence, who *almost always spent the whole day at the bookseller's*, as in writing himself he perpetually wanted to consult other authors, and had very few books at their lodgings: but she would not mention that the room was his, lest Cecilia should object to making use of it, and she knew she had no other chance of having the conversation with her she had so very long wished for. She then again begged her pardon, and hoped the behaviour of her mother would not induce her to give her up, as she was shocked at it beyond measure, and as her brother, she assured her, was as innocent of it as herself.

Cecilia heard her with pleasure, and felt for her an encreasing regard. The openness of her confidence in the morning had merited all her affection, and she gave her the warmest protestations of a friendship which she was certain would be lasting as her life.

Henrietta then, with a countenance that spoke the lightness of her heart, hastily took her leave, saying she did not dare be out longer, lest her mother should discover her excursion. Cecilia insisted, however, upon her going in a chair, which she ordered her servant to attend, and take care himself to discharge.

This visit, joined to the tender and unreserved conversation of the morning, gave Cecilia the strongest

desire to invite her to her house in the country; but the terror of Mrs Belfield's insinuations, added to the cruel interpretations she had to expect from Mr Delvile, forbid her indulging this wish, though it was the only one that just now she could form.

Chapter vij.

A CALM.

CECILIA took leave over night of the family, as she would not stay their rising in the morning: Mr Monckton, though certain not to sleep when she was going, forbearing to mark his solicitude by quitting his apartment at any unusual hour. Lady Margaret parted from her with her accustomed ungraciousness, and Miss Bennet, because in her presence, in a manner scarcely less displeasing.

The next morning, with only her servants, the moment it was light, she set out. Her journey was without incident or interruption, and she went immediately to the house of Mrs Bayley, where she had settled to board till her own was finished.

Mrs Bayley was a mere good sort of woman, who lived decently well with her servants, and tolerably well with her neighbours, upon a small annuity, which made her easy and comfortable, though by no means superior to such an addition to her little income as an occasional boarder might produce.

Here Cecilia continued a full month: which time had no other employment than what she voluntarily gave to herself by active deeds of benevolence.

At Christmas, to the no little joy of the neighbourhood, she took possession of her own house, which was situated about three miles from Bury.

The better sort of people were happy to see her thus settled amongst them, and the poorer, who by what they already had received, knew well what they still might expect, regarded the day in which she fixed herself in her mansion, as a day to themselves of prosperity and triumph.

As she was no longer, as hitherto, repairing to a temporary habitation, which at pleasure she might quit, and to which, at a certain period, she could have no possible claim, but to a house which was her own for ever, or, at least, could solely by her own choice be transferred, she determined, as much as was in her power, in quitting her desultory dwellings, to empty her mind of the transactions which had passed in them, and upon entering a house where she was permanently to reside, to make the expulsion of her past sorrows, the basis upon which to establish her future serenity.

And this, though a work of pain and difficulty, was not impracticable; her sensibility, indeed, was keen, and she had suffered from it the utmost torture; but her feelings were not more powerful than her understanding was strong, and her fortitude was equal to her trials. Her calamities had saddened, but not weakened her mind, and the words of Delvile in speaking of his mother occurred to her now with all the conviction of experience, that "evils inevitable are always best supported, because known to be past amendment, and felt to give defiance to struggling." *.

A plan by which so great a revolution was to be wrought in her mind, was not to be effected by any sudden effort of magnanimity, but by a regular and even tenour of courage mingled with prudence. Nothing, therefore, appeared to her so indispensable as constant employment, by which a variety of new images might force their way in her mind to supplant the

* See Vol. ii. p. 317.

old ones, and by which no time might be allowed for brooding over melancholy retrospections.

Her first effort, in this work of mental reformation, was to part with Fidel, whom hitherto she had almost involuntarily guarded, but whom she only could see to revive the most dangerous recollections. She sent him, therefore, to the castle, but without any message; Mrs Delvile, she was sure, would require none to make her rejoice in his restoration.

Her next step was writing to Albany, who had given her his direction, to acquaint him she was now ready to put in practice their long concerted scheme. Albany instantly hastened to her, and joyfully accepted the office of becoming at once her Almoner and her Monitor. He made it his business to seek objects of distress, and always but too certain to find them, of conducting her himself to their habitations, and then leaving to her own liberality the assistance their several cases demanded: and, in the overflowing of his zeal upon these occasions, and the rapture of his heart in thus disposing, almost at his pleasure, of her noble fortune, he seemed, at times, to feel an extasy that, from its novelty and its excess, was almost too exquisite to be borne. He joined with the beggars in pouring blessings upon her head, he prayed for her with the poor, and he thanked her with the succoured.

The pew-opener and her children failed not to keep their appointment, and Cecilia presently contrived to settle them in her neighbourhood: where the poor woman, as she recovered her strength, soon got a little work, and all deficiencies in her power of maintaining herself were supplied by her generous patroness. The children, however, she ordered to be coarsely brought up, having no intention to provide for them but by helping them to common employments.

The promise, also, so long made to Mrs Harrel of

an apartment in her house, was now performed. That lady accepted it with the utmost alacrity, glad to make any change in her situation, which constant solitude had rendered wholly insupportable. Mr Arnott accompanied her to the house, and spent one day there; but receiving from Cecilia, though extremely civil and sweet to him, no hint of any invitation for repeating his visit, he left it in sadness, and returned to his own in deep dejection. Cecilia saw with concern how he nourished his hopeless passion, but knew that to suffer his visits would almost authorise his feeding it; and while she pitied unaffectedly the unhappiness she occasioned, she resolved to double her own efforts towards avoiding similar wretchedness.

This action, however, was a point of honour, not of friendship, the time being long since past that the society of Mrs Harrel could afford her any pleasure; but the promises she had so often made to Mr Harrel in his distresses, though extorted from her merely by the terrors of the moment, still were promises, and, therefore, she held herself bound to fulfil them.

Yet far from finding comfort in this addition to her family, Mrs Harrel proved to her nothing more than a trouble and an incumbrance; with no inherent resources, she was continually in search of occasional supplies; she fatigued Cecilia with wonder at the privacy of her life, and tormented her with proposals of parties and entertainments. She was eternally in amazement that with powers so large, she had wishes so confined, and was evidently disappointed that upon coming to so ample an estate, she lived, with respect to herself and her family, with no more magnificence or shew than if Heiress to only £500 a year.

But Cecilia was determined to think and to live for herself, without regard to unmeaning wonder or selfish remonstrances; she had neither ambition for splendour,

nor spirits for dissipation; the recent sorrow of her heart had deadened it for the present to all personal taste of happiness, and her only chance for regaining it, seemed through the medium of bestowing it upon others. She had seen, too, by Mr Harrel, how wretchedly external brilliancy could cover inward woe, and she had learned at Delvile Castle to grow sick of parade and grandeur. Her equipage, therefore, was without glare, though not without elegance, her table was plain, though hospitably plentiful, her servants were for use, though too numerous to be for labour. The system of her œconomy, like that of her liberality, was formed by rules of reason, and her own ideas of right, and not by compliance with example, nor by emulation with the gentry in her neighbourhood.

But though thus deviating in her actions from the usual customs of the young and rich, she was peculiarly careful not to offend them by singularity of manners. When she mixed with them, she was easy, unaffected, and well bred, and though she saw them but seldom, her good humour and desire of obliging kept them always her friends. The plan she had early formed at Mrs Harrel's she now studied daily to put in practice; but that part by which the useless or frivolous were to be excluded her house, she found could only be supported by driving from her half her acquaintance.

Another part, also, of that project she found still less easy of adoption, which was solacing herself with the society of the wise, good, and intelligent. Few answered this description, and those few were with difficulty attainable. Many might with joy have sought out her liberal dwelling, but no one had idly waited till the moment it was at her disposal. All who possessed at once both talents and wealth, were so generally courted they were rarely to be procured; and all who to talents alone owed their consequence, demanded, if

worth acquiring, time and delicacy to be obtained. Fortune she knew, however, was so often at war with Nature, that she doubted not shortly meeting those who would gladly avail themselves of her offered protection.

Yet, *tired of the murmurs of Mrs Harrel*, she longed for some relief from her society, and her desire daily grew stronger to owe that relief to Henrietta Belfield. The more she meditated upon this wish, the less unattainable it appeared to her, till by frequently combating its difficulties, she began to consider them imaginary: *Mrs Belfield, while her son was actually with herself*, might see she took not Henrietta as his appendage; and Mr Delvile, should he make further enquiries, might hear that her real connection was with the sister, since she received her in the country, where the brother made no pretence to follow her. She considered, too, how ill *she should be rewarded in giving up Henrietta for* Mr Delvile, who was already determined to think ill of her, and whose prejudices no sacrifice would remove.

Having hesitated, therefore, some time between the desire of present alleviation, and the fear of future mischief, the consciousness of her own innocence at *length vanquished all dread of unjust censure, and she* wrote an invitation to Henrietta enclosed in a letter to her mother.

The answer of Henrietta expressed her rapture at the proposal; and that of Mrs Belfield made no objection but to the expence.

Cecilia, therefore, sent her own maid to travel with her into Suffolk, with proper directions to pay for the journey.

The gratitude of the delighted Henrietta at the meeting was boundless; and her joy at so unexpected a mark of favour made her half wild. Cecilia suffered *it not to languish for want of kindness to support it*; she took her to her bosom, became the soother of all

her cares, and reposed in her, in return, every thought that led not to Delvile.

There, however, she was uniformly silent; solemnly and eternally parted from him, far from trusting the secret of her former connexion to Henrietta, the whole study of her life was to drive the remembrance of it from herself.

Henrietta now tasted a happiness to which as yet her whole life had been a stranger; she was suddenly removed from turbulent vulgarity to the enjoyment of calm elegance; and the gentleness of her disposition, instead of being tyrannically imposed upon, not only made her loved with affection, but treated with the most scrupulous delicacy. Cecilia had her share in all the comfort she bestowed; she had now a friend to oblige, and a companion to converse with. She communicated to her all her schemes, and made her the partner of her benevolent excursions; she found her disposition as amiable upon trial, as her looks and her manners had been engaging at first sight; and her constant presence and constant sweetness, imperceptibly revived her spirits, and gave a new interest to her existence.

Meantime Mr Monckton, who returned in about a fortnight to the Grove, observed the encreasing influence of Albany with the most serious concern. The bounties of Cecilia, extensive, magnificent, unlimited, were the theme of every tongue, and though sometimes censured and sometimes admired, they were wondered at universally. He suffered her for a while to go on without remonstrance, hoping her enthusiasm would abate, as its novelty wore out: but finding that week following week was still distinguished by some fresh act of beneficence, he grew so alarmed and uneasy, he could restrain himself no longer. He spoke to her with warmth, he represented her conduct as highly dangerous in its consequence; he said she would but

court impostors from every corner of the kingdom, called Albany a lunatic, whom she should rather avoid than obey; and insinuated that if a report was spread of her proceedings, a charity so prodigal, would excite such alarm, that no man would think even her large and splendid fortune, would ensure him from ruin in seeking her alliance.

Cecilia heard this exhortation without either terror or impatience, and answered it with the utmost steadiness. His influence over her mind was no longer uncontrolled, for though her suspicions were not strengthened, they had never been removed, and friendship has no foe so dangerous as distrust! She thanked him, however, for his zeal, but assured him his apprehensions were groundless, since though she acted from *inclination, she acted not without thought.* Her income was very large, and she was wholly without family or connection; to spend it merely upon herself would be something still worse than extravagance, it must result from wilfulness the most inexcusable, as her disposition was naturally averse to luxury and expence. She might save indeed, but for whom? not a creature had such a claim upon her; and with regard to herself, *she was so provided for it would be unnecessary.* She would never, she declared, run in debt even for a week, but while her estate was wholly clear, she would spend it without restriction.

To his hint of any future alliance, she only said that those who disapproved her conduct, would probably be those she should disapprove in her turn; should such an event however take place, the retrenching from that *time all her present peculiar expences, would surely,* in a clear £3000 a-year, leave her rich enough for any man, without making it incumbent upon her at present, to deny herself the only pleasure she could taste, in bestowing that money which to her was superfluous,

upon those who received it as the prolongation of their existence.

A firmness so deliberate in a system he so much dreaded, greatly shocked Mr Monckton, though it intimidated him from opposing it; he saw she was too earnest, and too well satisfied she was right, to venture giving her disgust by controverting her arguments; the conversation, therefore, ended with new discontent to himself, and with an impression upon the mind of Cecilia, that though he was zealous and friendly, he was somewhat too worldly and suspicious.

She went on, therefore, as before, distributing with a lavish hand all she could spare from her own household; careful of nothing but of guarding against imposition, which, though she sometimes unavoidably endured, her discernment, and the activity of her investigating diligence, saved her from suffering frequently. And the steadiness with which she repulsed those whom she detected in deceit, was a check upon tricks and fraud, though it could not wholly put a stop to them.

Money, to her, had long appeared worthless and valueless; it had failed to procure her the establishment for which she once flattered herself it seemed purposely designed; it had been disdained by the Delviles, for the sake of whose connection she had alone ever truly rejoiced in possessing it; and after such a conviction of its inefficacy to secure her happiness, she regarded it as of little importance to herself, and therefore thought it almost the due of those whose distresses gave it a consequence to which with her it was a stranger.

In this manner with Cecilia passed the first winter of her majority. She had sedulously filled it with occupations, and her occupations had proved fertile in keeping her mind from idleness, and in restoring it to chearfulness. Calls upon her attention so soothing, and avocations so various for her time, had answered the

great purpose for which originally she had planned them, in almost forcing from her thoughts those sorrows which, if indulged, would have rested in them incessantly.

———o———

Chapter viij.

AN ALARM.

THE spring was now advancing, and the weather was remarkably fine; when one morning, while Cecilia was walking with Mrs Harrel and Henrietta on the lawn before her house, to which the last dinner bell was just summoning them, to return, Mrs Harrel looked round and stopt at sight of a gentleman galloping towards them, who in less than a minute approached, and dismounting and leaving his horse to his servant, struck them all at the same instant to be no other than young Delvile!

A sight so unexpected, so unaccountable, so wonderful, after an absence so long, and to which they were mutually bound, almost wholly over-powered Cecilia from surprise and a thousand other feelings, and she caught Mrs Harrel by the arm, not knowing what she did, as if for succour; while Henrietta with scarce less, though much more glad emotion, suddenly exclaimed, "'tis Mr Delvile!" and sprang forward to meet him.

He had reached them, and in a voice that spoke hurry and perturbation, respectfully made his compliments to them all, before Cecilia recovered even the use of her feet: but no sooner were they restored to her, than she employed them with the quickest motion in her power, still leaning upon Mrs Harrel, to hasten into the house. Her solemn promise to Mrs Delvile became uppermost in her thoughts, and her surprise was

soon succeeded by displeasure, that thus, without any preparation, he forced her to break it by an interview she had no means to prevent.

Just as they reached the entrance into the house, the Butler came to tell Cecilia that dinner was upon the table. Delvile then went up to her, and said, "May I wait upon you for one instant before—or after you dine?"

"I am engaged, Sir," answered she, though hardly able to speak, "for the whole day."

"You will not, I hope, refuse to hear me," cried he, eagerly, "I cannot write what I have to say,——"

"There is no occasion that you should, Sir," interrupted she, "since I should scarcely find time to read it."

She then courtsied, though without looking at him, and went into the house; Delvile remaining in utter dismay, not daring, however wishing, to follow her. But when Mrs Harrel, much surprised at behaviour so unusual from Cecilia, approached him with some civil speeches, he started, and wishing her good day, bowed, and remounted his horse: pursued by the soft eyes of Henrietta till wholly out of sight.

They then both followed Cecilia to the dining-parlour.

Had not Mrs Harrel been of this small party, the dinner would have been served in vain; Cecilia, still trembling with emotion, bewildered with conjecture, angry with Delvile for thus surprising her, angry with herself for so severely receiving him, amazed what had tempted him to such a violation of their joint agreement, and irresolute as much what to wish as what to think, was little disposed for eating, and with difficulty compelled herself to do the honours of her table.

Henrietta, whom the sight of Delvile had at once delighted and disturbed, whom the behaviour of Cecilia

had filled with wonder and consternation, and whom the evident inquietude and disappointment which that behaviour had given to Delvile, had struck with grief and terror, could not swallow even a morsel, but having cut her meat about her plate, gave it, untouched, to a servant.

Mrs Harrel, however, though she had had her share in the surprise, had wholly escaped all other emotion; *and only concluded in her own mind*, that Cecilia could sometimes be out of humour and ill bred, as well as the rest of the world.

While the dessert was serving, a note was brought to Henrietta, which a servant was waiting in great haste to have answered.

Henrietta, stranger to all forms of politeness, though by nature soft, obliging and delicate, opened it immediately; she started as she cast her eye over it, but blushed, sparkled, and looked enchanted, and hastily rising, without even a thought of any apology, ran out of the room to answer it.

Cecilia, whose quick eye, by a glance unavoidable, had seen the hand of Delvile, was filled with new amazement at the sight. As soon as the servants were gone, she begged Mrs Harrel to excuse her, and went to her own apartment.

Here, in a few minutes, she was followed by Henrietta, whose countenance beamed with pleasure, and whose voice spoke tumultuous delight. "My dear, dear Miss Beverley!" she cried, "I have such a thing to tell you!—you would never guess it,—I don't know how to believe it myself,—but Mr Delvile has written *to me!—he has indeed!* that note was from him.—I have been locking it up, for fear of accidents, but I'll run and fetch it, that you may see it yourself."

She then ran away; leaving Cecilia much perplexed, much uneasy for herself, and both grieved and alarmed

for the too tender, too susceptible Henrietta, who was thus easily the sport of every airy and credulous hope.

"*If I did not shew it you,*" cried Henrietta, running back in a moment, "you would never think it possible, for it is to make such a request—that it has frightened me almost out of my wits!"

Cecilia then read the note.

To Miss Belfield.

Mr Delvile presents his compliments to Miss Belfield, and begs to be permitted to wait upon her for a few minutes, at any time in the afternoon she will be so good as to appoint.

"*Only think,*" cried the rapturous Henrietta, "*it was me, poor simple me, of all people, that he wanted so to speak with!—I am sure I thought a different thought when he went away! but do, dearest Miss Beverley, tell me this one thing, what do you think he can have to say to me?*"

"Indeed," replied Cecilia, extremely embarrassed, "it is impossible for me to conjecture."

"*If you can't, I am sure, then, it is no wonder I can't!* and I have been thinking of a million of things in a minute. It can't be about any business, because I know nothing in the world of any business; and it can't be about my brother, because he would go to our house in town about him, and there he would see him himself; and it can't be about my dear Miss Beverley, because then he would have written the note to her: and it can't be about any body else, because I know nobody else of his acquaintance."

Thus went on the sanguine Henrietta, settling whom and what it could *not* be about, till she left but the one thing to which her wishes pointed that it *could* be about. Cecilia heard her with true compassion, certain that she

was deceiving herself with imaginations the most pernicious; yet unable to know how to quell them, while in such doubt and darkness herself.

This conversation was soon interrupted, by a message that a gentleman in the parlour begged to speak with Miss Belfield.

"O dearest, dearest Miss Beverley!" cried Henrietta, with encreasing agitation, "what in the world shall I say to him, advise me, pray advise me, for I can't think of a single word!"

"Impossible, my dear Henrietta, unless I knew what he would say to you!"

"O but I can guess, I can guess!"—cried she, her cheeks glowing, while her whole frame shook, "and I sha'n't know what in the whole world to answer him! I know I shall behave like a fool,—I know I shall disgrace myself sadly!"

Cecilia, truly sorry Delvile should see her in such emotion, endeavoured earnestly to compose her, though never less tranquil herself. But she could not succeed, and she went down stairs with expectations of happiness almost too potent for her reason.

Not such were those of Cecilia; a dread of some new conflict took possession of her mind, that mind so long tortured with struggles, so lately restored to serenity!

Henrietta soon returned, but not the same Henrietta she went;—the glow, the hope, the flutter were all over; she looked pale and wan, but attempting, as she entered the room, to call up a smile, she failed, and burst into tears.

Cecilia threw her arms round her neck, and tried to console her; but, happy to hide her face in her bosom, she only gave the freer indulgence to her grief, and rather melted than comforted by her tenderness, sobbed aloud.

Cecilia too easily conjectured the disappointment she

had met, to pain her by asking it; she forbore even to gratify her own curiosity by questions that could not but lead to her mortification, and suffering her therefore to take her own time for what she had to communicate, she hung over her in silence with the most patient pity.

Henrietta was very sensible of this kindness, though she knew not half its merit: but it was a long time before she could articulate, for sobbing, that *all* Mr Delvile wanted, at last, was only to beg she would acquaint Miss Beverley, that he had done himself the honour of waiting upon her with a message from Mrs Delvile.

"From Mrs Delvile?" exclaimed Cecilia, all emotion in her turn, "good heaven! how much, then, have I been to blame? where is he now?—where can I send to him?—tell me, my sweet Henrietta, this instant!"

"Oh madam!" cried Henrietta, bursting into a fresh flood of tears, "how foolish have I been to open my silly heart to you!—he is come to pay his addresses to you!—I am sure he is!—"

"No, no, no!" cried Cecilia, "indeed he is not!—but I must, I ought to see him,—where, my love, is he?"

"In the parlour,—waiting for an answer.—"

Cecilia, who at any other time would have been provoked at such a delay in the delivery of a message so important, felt now nothing but concern for Henrietta, whom she hastily kissed, but instantly, however, quitted, and hurried to Delvile, with expectations almost equally sanguine as those her poor friend but the moment before had crushed.

"Oh now," thought she, "if at last Mrs Delvile herself has relented, with what joy will I give up all reserve, all disguise, and frankly avow the faithful affection of my heart!"

Delvile received her not with the eagerness with

which he had first addressed her; he looked extremely disturbed, and, even after her entrance, undetermined how to begin.

She waited, however, his explanation in silence; and, after an irresolute pause, he said, with a gravity not wholly free from resentment, "I presumed, madam, to wait upon you from the permission of my mother; but I believe I have obtained it so late, that the influence I hoped from it is past!"

"I had no means, Sir," answered she, chearfully, "*to know that you came from her: I should else have* received her commands without any hesitation."

"I would thank you for the honour you do her, were it less pointedly exclusive. I have, however, no right of reproach! yet suffer me to ask, could you, madam, after such a parting, after a renunciation so absolute of all future claim upon you, which though extorted from me by duty, I was bound, having promised, to fulfil by principle,—could you imagine me so unsteady, so dishonourable, as to obtrude myself into your presence while that promise was still in force?"

"I find," cried Cecilia, in whom a secret hope every moment grew stronger, "I have been too hasty; I did *indeed believe Mrs Delvile would never authorise such a* visit; but as you have so much surprised me, I have a right to your pardon for a little doubt."

"There spoke Miss Beverley!" cried Delvile, reanimating at this little apology, "the same, the unaltered Miss Beverley I hoped to find!—yet *is* she unaltered? am I not too precipitate? and is the tale I have heard about Belfield a dream? an error? a falsehood?"

"But that so quick a succession of quarrels," said Cecilia, half smiling, "would be endless perplexity, I, now, would be affronted that you can ask me such a question."

"Had I, indeed, *thought* it a question," cried he, "I would not have asked it: but never for a moment did I

credit it, till the rigour of your repulse alarmed me. You have condescended, now, to account for that, and I am therefore encouraged to make known to you the purpose of my venturing this visit. Yet not with confidence shall I speak if, scarce even with hope!—it is a purpose that is the offspring of despair,—"

"One thing, Sir," cried Cecilia, who now became frightened again, "let me say before you proceed; if your purpose has not the sanction of Mrs Delvile, as well as your visit, I would gladly be excused hearing it, since I shall most certainly refuse it."

"I would mention nothing," answered he, "without her concurrence; she has given it me: and my father himself has permitted my present application."

"Good Heaven!" cried Cecilia, "is it possible!" clasping her hands together in the eagerness of her surprise and delight.

"*Is it possible!*" repeated Delvile, with a look of rapture; "ah Miss Beverley!—once my own Cecilia!—do you, can you *wish* it possible?"

"No, No!" cried she, while pleasure and expectation sparkled in her eyes, "I wish nothing about it.—Yet tell me how it has happened,—I am *curious*," added she, smiling, "though not interested in it."

"What hope would this sweetness give me," cried he, "were my scheme almost any other than it is!—but you cannot,—no, it would be unreasonable,—it would be madness to expect your compliance!—it is next to madness even in me to wish it,—but how shall a man who is desperate be prudent and circumspect?"

"Spare, spare yourself," cried the ingenuous Cecilia, "this unnecessary pain!—you will find from me no unnecessary scruples."

"You know not what you say!—all noble as you are, the sacrifice I have to propose——"

"Speak it," cried she, "with confidence! speak it

even with certainty of success! I will be wholly undisguised, and openly, honestly own to you, that no proposal, no sacrifice can be mentioned, to which I will not instantly agree, if first it has had the approbation of Mrs Delvile."

Delvile's gratitude and thanks for a concession never before so voluntarily made to him, interrupted for a while, even his power of explaining himself. And now, for the first time, Cecilia's sincerity was chearful, since now, for the first time, it seemed opposed by no duty.

When still, therefore, he hesitated, she herself held out her hand to him, saying, "what must I do more? must I offer this pledge to you?"

"*For my life would I not resign it!*" *cried he*, delightedly receiving it; "but oh, how soon will you withdraw it, when the only terms upon which I can hold it, are those of making it sign from itself its natural right and inheritance?"

Cecilia, not comprehending him, only looked amazed, and he proceeded.

"Can you, for my sake, make such a sacrifice as this? can you for a man who for yours is not permitted to give up his name, give up yourself the fortune of your late uncle? consent to such settlements as I can make upon you from my own? part with so splendid an *income wholly and for-ever?—and with only your* paternal £10,000 condescend to become mine, as if your uncle had never existed, and you had been Heiress to no other wealth?"

This, indeed, was a stroke to Cecilia unequalled by any she had met, and more cruel than any she could have in reserve. At the proposal of parting with her uncle's fortune, which, desirable as it was, had as yet been only productive to her of misery, her heart, disinterested, and wholly careless of money, was prompt to accede to the condition; but at the mention of her

paternal fortune, that fortune, of which, now, not the smallest vestige remained, horror seized all her faculties! she turned pale, she trembled, she involuntarily drew back her hand, and betrayed, by speechless agitation, the sudden agonies of her soul!

Delvile, struck by this evident dismay, instantly concluded his plan had disgusted her. He waited some minutes in anxious expectation of an answer, but finding her silence continued while her emotion encreased, the deepest crimson dyed his face, and unable to check his chagrin, though not daring to confess his disappointment, he suddenly quitted her, and walked, in much disorder, about the room. But soon recovering some composure, from the assistance of pride, "Pardon, madam," he said, "a trial such as no man can be vindicated in making. I have indulged a romantic whim, which your better judgment disapproves, and I receive but the mortification my presumption deserved."

"You know not then," said Cecilia, in a faint voice, "my inability to comply?"

"Your ability or inability, I presume, are elective?"

"Oh no!—my power is lost!—my fortune itself is gone!"

"Impossible! utterly impossible!" cried he with vehemence.

"Oh that it were!—your father knows it but too well."

"My father!"

"Did he, then, never hint it to you?"

"Oh distraction!" cried Delvile, "what horrible confirmation is coming!" and again he walked away, as if wanting courage to hear her.

Cecilia was too much shocked to force upon him her explanation; but presently returning to her, he said, "*you*, only, could have made this credible!"

"Had you, then, actually heard it?"

"Oh I had heard it as the most infamous of false-

hoods! my heart swelled with indignation at so villainous a calumny, and had it not come from my father, my resentment at it had been inveterate!"

"Alas!" cried Cecilia, "the fact is undeniable! yet the circumstances you may have heard with it, are I doubt not exaggerated."

"Exaggerated indeed!" he answered; "I was told you had been surprised concealed with Belfield in a back room, I was told that your parental fortune was totally exhausted, and that during your minority you had been a dealer with Jews! I was told all this by my father;—you may believe I had else not easily been made hear it!"

"Yet thus far," said she, "he told you but what is true; though——"

"True!" interrupted Delvile, with a start almost frantic. "Oh never, then, was truth so scandalously wronged!—I denied the whole charge!—I disbelieved every syllable!—I pledged my own honour to prove every assertion false!"

"Generous Delvile!" cried Cecilia, melting into tears, "this is what I expected from you! and, believe me, in *your* integrity my reliance had been similar!"

"Why does Miss Beverley weep?" cried he, softened, and approaching her, "and why has she given me this alarm? these things must at least have been misrepresented, deign, then, to clear up a mystery in which suspense is torture!"

Cecilia, then, with what precision and clearness her agitation allowed her, related the whole history of her taking up the money of the Jew for Mr Harrel, and told, without reserve, the reason of her trying to abscond from his father at Mrs Belfield's. Delvile listened to her account with almost an agony of attention, now admiring her conduct; now resenting her ill usage; now compassionating her losses; but though variously moved

by different parts, receiving from the whole the delight he most coveted in the establishment of her innocence.

Thanks and applause the warmest, both accompanied and followed her narration; and then, at her request, he related in return the several incidents and circumstances to which he had owed the permission of this visit.

He had meant immediately to have gone abroad; but the indisposition of his mother made him unwilling to leave the kingdom till her health seemed in a situation less precarious. That time, however, came not; the Winter advanced, and she grew evidently worse. He gave over, therefore, his design till the next Spring, when, if she were able, it was her desire to try the South of France for her recovery, whither he meant to conduct her.

But, during his attendance upon her, the plan he had just mentioned occurred to him, and he considered how much greater would be his chance of happiness in marrying Cecilia with scarce any fortune at all, than in marrying another with the largest. He was convinced she was far other than expensive, or a lover of shew, and soon flattered himself she might be prevailed upon to concur with him, that in living together, though comparatively upon little, they should mutually be happier than in living asunder upon much.

When he started this scheme to his mother, she heard it with mingled admiration of his disinterestedness, and regret at its occasion: yet the loftiness of her own mind, her high personal value for Cecilia, her anxiety to see her son finally settled while she lived, lest his disappointment should keep him single from a lasting disgust, joined to a dejection of spirits from an apprehension that her interference had been cruel, all favoured his scheme, and forbid her resistance. She had often protested, in their former conflicts, that had

Cecilia been portionless, her objections had been less than to an estate so conditioned; and that to give to her son a woman so exalted in herself, she would have conquered the mere opposition of interest, though that of family honour she held invincible. Delvile now called upon her to remember those words, and ever strict in fidelity, she still promised to abide by them.

Ah! thought Cecilia, is virtue, then, as inconsistent as vice? and can the same character be thus high-souled, thus nobly disinterested with regard to riches, whose pride is so narrow and so insurmountable, with respect to family prejudice!

Yet such a sacrifice from Cecilia herself, whose income intitled her to settlements the most splendid, Mrs Delvile thought scarcely to be solicited; but as her son was conscious he gave up in expectation no less than she would give up in possession, he resolved upon making the experiment, and felt an internal assurance of success.

This matter being finally settled with his mother, the harder task remained of vanquishing the father, by whom, and before whom the name of Cecilia was never mentioned, not even after his return from town, though loaded with imaginary charges against her. Mr Delvile held it a diminution of his own in the honour of his son, to suppose he wanted still fresh motives for resigning her. He kept, therefore, to himself the ill opinion he brought down, as a resource in case of danger, but a resource he disdained to make use of, unless driven to it by absolute necessity.

But, at the new proposal of his son, the accusation held in reserve broke out; he called Cecilia a dabler with Jews, and said she had been so from the time of her uncle's death; he charged her with the grossest general extravagance, to which he added a most insidious attack upon her character, drawn from her visits

at Belfield's of long standing, as well as the particular time when he had himself surprised her concealed with the young man in a back parlour: and he asserted, that most of the large sums she was continually taking up from her fortune, were lavished without scruple upon this dangerous and improper favourite.

Delvile had heard this accusation with a rage scarce restrained from violence; confident in her innocence, he boldly pronounced the whole a forgery, and demanded the author of such cruel defamation. Mr Delvile, much offended, refused to name any authority, but consented, with an air of triumph, to abide by the effect of his own proposal, and gave him a supercilious promise no longer to oppose the marriage, if the terms he meant to offer to Miss Beverley, of renouncing her uncle's estate, and producing her father's fortune, were accepted.

"O little did I credit," said Delvile in conclusion, "that he knew indeed so well this last condition was impracticable! his assertions were without proof; I thought them prejudiced surmises; and I came in the full hope I should convict him of his error. My mother, too, who warmly and even angrily defended you, was as firmly satisfied as myself that the whole was a mistake, and that enquiry would prove your fortune as undiminished as your purity. How will she be shocked at the tale I have now to unfold! how irritated at your injuries from Harrel! how grieved that your own too great benevolence should be productive of such black aspersions upon your character!"

"I have been," cried Cecilia, "too facile and too unguarded; yet always, at the moment, I seemed but guided by common humanity. I have ever thought myself secure of more wealth than I could require, and regarded the want of money as an evil from which I was unavoidably exempted. My own fortune, there-

fore, appeared to me of small consequence, while the revenue of my uncle insured me perpetual prosperity.—Oh, had I foreseen this moment!—"

"Would you, then, have listened to my romantic proposal?"

"Would I have listened?——do you not see too plainly I could not have hesitated!"

"Oh yet, then, most generous of human beings, yet then be mine! By our own œconomy we will pay off our mortgages; by living a while abroad, we will clear all our estates; I will still keep the name to which my family is bigotted, and my gratitude for your compliance shall make you forget what you lose by it!"

"Speak not to me such words!" cried Cecilia, hastily rising; "your friends will not listen to them, neither, therefore, must I."

"My friends," cried he with energy, "are henceforth out of the question: my father's concurrence with a proposal he *knew* you had not power to grant, was in fact a mere permission to insult you; for if, instead of dark charges, he had given any authority for your losses, I had myself spared you the shock you have so undeservedly received from hearing it.—But to consent to a plan which *could* not be accepted!—to make *me* a tool to offer indignity to Miss Beverley!——He has released me from his power by so erroneous an *exertion of it, and my own honour has a claim to* which his commands must give place. That honour binds me to Miss Beverley as forcibly as my admiration, and no voice but her own shall determine my future destiny."

"That voice, then," said Cecilia, "again refers you to your mother. Mr Delvile, indeed, has not treated me kindly; and this last mock concession was unnecessary cruelty; but Mrs Delvile merits my utmost respect, and I will listen to nothing which has not her previous sanction."

"But will her sanction be sufficient? and may I hope, in obtaining it, the security of yours?"

"When I have said I will hear nothing without it, may you not almost infer—— I will refuse nothing with it!"

The acknowledgments he would now have poured forth, Cecilia would not hear, telling him, with some gaiety, they were yet unauthorized by Mrs Delvile. She insisted upon his leaving her immediately, and never again returning, without his mother's express approbation. With regard to his father, she left him totally to his own inclination; she had received from him nothing but pride and incivility, and determined to shew publicly her superior respect for Mrs Delvile, by whose discretion and decision she was content to abide.

"Will you not, then, from time to time," cried Delvile, "suffer me to consult with you?"

"No, no," answered she, "do not ask it! I have never been insincere with you, never but from motives not to be overcome, reserved even for a moment; I have told you I will put every thing into the power of Mrs Delvile, but I will not a second time risk my peace by any action unknown to her."

Delvile gratefully acknowledged her goodness, and promised to require nothing more. He then obeyed her by taking leave, eager himself to put an end to this new uncertainty, and supplicating only that her good wishes might follow his enterprise.

And thus, again, was wholly broken the tranquility of Cecilia; new hopes, however faint, awakened all her affections, and strong fears, but too reasonable, interrupted her repose. Her destiny, once more, was as undecided as ever, and the expectations she had crushed, retook possession of her heart.

The suspicions she had conceived of Mr Monckton again occurred to her; though unable to ascertain and

unwilling to believe them, she tried to drive them from her thoughts. *She lamented, however, with bitterness,* her unfortunate connexion with Mr Harrel, whose unworthy impositions upon her kindness of temper and generosity, now proved to her an evil far more serious and extensive, than in the midst of her repugnance to *them she had ever apprehended.*

Chapter ix.

A SUSPENSE.

DELVILE had been gone but a short time, before Henrietta, her eyes still red, though no longer streaming, opened the parlour door, and asked if she might come in?

Cecilia wished to be alone, yet could not refuse her.

"Well, madam," cried she, with a forced smile, and constrained air of bravery, "*did not I guess right?*"

"In what?" said Cecilia, unwilling to understand her.

"In what I said would happen?—I am sure you know what I mean."

Cecilia, extremely embarrassed, made no answer; she much regretted the circumstances which had prevented an earlier communication, and was uncertain whether, now, it would prove most kind or most cruel to acquaint her with what was in agitation, which, should it terminate in nothing, was unnecessarily wounding her delicacy for the openness of her confidence, and which, however serviceable it might prove to her in the end, was in the means so rough and piercing she felt the utmost repugnance to the experiment.

"You think me, madam, too free," said Henrietta, "in asking such a question; and indeed your kindness

has been so great, it may well make me forget myself: but if it does, I am sure I deserve you should send me home directly, and then there is not much fear I shall soon be brought to my senses!"

"No, my dear Henrietta, I can never think you too free; I have told you already every thing I thought you would have pleasure in hearing; whatever I have concealed, I have been fearful would only pain you."

"I have *deserved*, madam," said she, with spirit, "to be pained, for I have behaved with the folly of a baby. I am very angry with myself indeed! I was old enough to have known better,—and I ought to have been wise enough."

"You must then be angry with yourself, next," said Cecilia, anxious to re-encourage her, "for all the love that I bear you; since to your openness and frankness it was entirely owing."

"But there are some things that people should *not* be frank in; however, I am only come now to beg you will tell me, madam, when it is to be;—and don't think I ask out of nothing but curiosity, for I have a very great reason for it indeed."

"What be, my dear Henrietta?—you are very rapid in your ideas!"

"I will tell you, madam, what my reason is; I shall go away to my own home,—and so I would if it were ten times a worse home than it is!——just exactly the day before. Because afterwards I shall never like to look that gentleman in the face,—never, never!—for married ladies I know are not to be trusted!"

"Be not apprehensive; you have no occasion. Whatever may be my fate, I will never be so treacherous as to betray my beloved Henrietta to *any* body."

"May I ask you, madam, one question?"

"Certainly."

"Why did all this never happen before?"

"Indeed," cried Cecilia, much distressed, "I know not that it will happen now."

"Why what, dear madam, can hinder it?"

"A thousand, thousand things! nothing can be less secure."

"And then I am still as much puzzled as ever. I heard, a good while ago, and we all heard that it was to be; and I thought that it was no wonder, I am sure, for I used often to think it was just what was most likely; but afterwards we heard it was no such thing, and from that moment I always believed there had been nothing at all in it."

"I must speak to you, I find, with sincerity; my affairs have long been in strange perplexity: I have not known myself what to expect; one day has perpetually reversed the prospect of another, and my mind has been in a state of uncertainty and disorder, that has kept it -- that still keeps it from comfort and from rest!"

"This surprises me indeed, madam! I thought *you* were all happiness! but I was sure you deserved it, and I thought you had it for that reward. And this has been the thing that has made me behave so wrong; for I took it into my head I might tell you every thing, because I concluded it could be nothing to you; for if great people loved one another, I always supposed they married directly; poor people, indeed, must stay till they are able to settle; but what in the whole world, thought I, if they like one another, should hinder such a rich lady as Miss Beverley from marrying such a rich gentleman at once?"

Cecilia now, finding there was no longer any chance for concealment, thought it better to give the poor Henrietta at least the gratification of unreserved confidence, which might somewhat sooth her uneasiness by proving her reliance in her faith. She frankly, therefore, confessed to her the whole of her situation. Henrietta wept at

the recital with bitterness, thought Mr Delvile a monster, and Mrs Delvile herself scarce human; pitied Cecilia with unaffected tenderness, and wondered that the person could exist who had the heart to give grief to young Delvile! She thanked her most gratefully for reposing such trust in her; and Cecilia made use of this opportunity, to enforce the necessity of her struggling more seriously to recover her indifferency.

She promised she would not fail; and forbore steadily from that time to name Delvile any more: but the depression of her spirits shewed she had suffered a disappointment such as astonished even Cecilia. Though modest and humble, she had conceived hopes the most romantic, and though she denied, even to herself, any expectations from Delvile, she involuntarily nourished them with the most sanguine simplicity. To compose and to strengthen her became the whole business of Cecilia; who, during her present suspense, could find no other employment in which she could take any interest.

Mr Monckton, to whom nothing was unknown that related to Cecilia, was soon informed of Delvile's visit, and hastened in the utmost alarm, to learn its event. She had now lost all the pleasure she had formerly derived from confiding in him, but though averse and confused, could not withstand his enquiries.

Unlike the tender Henrietta's was his disappointment at this relation, and his rage at such repeated trials was almost more than he could curb. He spared neither the Delviles for their insolence of mutability in rejecting or seeking her at their pleasure, nor herself for her easiness of submission in being thus the dupe of their caprices. The subject was difficult for Cecilia to dilate upon; she wished to clear, as he deserved, Delvile himself from any share in the censure, and she felt hurt and offended at the charge of her own improper readiness; yet shame and pride united in preventing much vindica-

tion of either, and she heard almost in silence what with pain she bore to hear at all.

He now saw, with inexpressible disturbance, that whatever was his power to make her uneasy, he had none to make her retract, and that the conditional promise she had given Delvile to be wholly governed by his mother, she was firm in regarding to be as sacred as one made at the altar.

Perceiving this, he dared trust his temper with no further debate; he assumed a momentary calmness for the purpose of taking leave of her, and with pretended good wishes for her happiness, whatever might be her determination, he stifled the reproaches with which his whole heart was swelling, and precipitately left her.

Cecilia, affected by his earnestness, yet perplexed in all her opinions, was glad to be relieved from useless exhortations, and not sorry, in her present uncertainty, that his visit was not repeated.

She neither saw nor heard from Delvile for a week, and augured nothing but evil from such delay. The following letter then came by the post.

To Miss Beverley.

April 2d, 1780.

I must write without comments, for I dare not trust myself with making any; I must write without any beginning address, for I know not how you will permit me to address you.

I have lived a life of tumult since last compelled to leave you, and when it may subside, I am still in utter ignorance.

The affecting account of the losses you have suffered through your beneficence to the Harrels, and the explanatory one of the calumnies you have sustained from your kindness to the Belfields, I related with the plain-

ness which alone I thought necessary to make them felt. I then told the high honour I had received, in meeting with no other repulse to my proposal, than was owing to an inability to accede to it; and informed my mother of the condescending powers with which you had invested her. In conclusion I mentioned my new scheme, and firmly, before I would listen to any opposition, I declared that though wholly to their decision I left the relinquishing my own name or your fortune, I was not only by your generosity more internally yours than ever, but that since again I had ventured, and with permission to apply to you, I should hold myself hence forward unalterably engaged to you.

And so I do, and so I shall! nor, after a renewal so public, will any prohibition but yours have force to keep me from throwing myself at your feet.

My father's answer I will not mention; I would I could forget it! his prejudices are irremediable, his resolutions are inflexible. Who or what has worked him into an animosity so irreclaimable, I cannot conjecture, nor will he tell; but something darkly mysterious has part in his wrath and his injustice.

My mother was much affected by your reference to herself. Words of the sweetest praise broke repeatedly from her; no other such woman, she said, existed; no other such instance could be found of fidelity so exalted! her son must have no heart but for low and mercenary selfishness, if, after a proof of regard so unexampled, he could bear to live without her! Oh how did such a sentence from lips so highly reverenced, animate, delight, confirm, and oblige me at once!

The displeasure of my father at this declaration was dreadful; his charges, always as improbable as injurious, now became too horrible for my ears; he disbelieved you had taken up the money for Harrel, he discredited that you visited the Belfields for Henrietta: passion not

merely banished his justice, but clouded his reason, and I soon left the room, that at least I might not hear the aspersions he forbid me to answer.

I left not, however, your fame to a weak champion: my mother defended it with all the spirit of truth, and all the confidence of similar virtue! yet they parted without conviction, and so mutually irritated with each other, that they agreed to meet no more.

This was too terrible! and I instantly consolidated my resentment to my father, and my gratitude to my mother, into concessions and supplications to both; I could not, however, succeed; my mother was deeply offended, my father was sternly inexorable: nor here rests the evil of their dissention, for the violence of the conflict has occasioned a return more alarming than ever of the illness of my mother.

All her faith in her recovery is now built upon going abroad; she is earnest to set off immediately; but Dr Lyster has advised her to make London in her way, and have a consultation of physicians before she departs.

To this she has agreed; and we are now upon the road thither.

Such is, at present, the melancholy state of my affairs. My mother *advised* me to write; forgive me, therefore, that I waited not something more decisive to say. I could prevail upon neither party to meet before the journey; nor could I draw from my father the base fabricator of the calumnies by which he has been thus abused.

Unhappily, I have nothing more to add: and whether intelligence, such as this, or total suspense, would be least irksome, I know not. If my mother bears her journey tolerably well, I have yet one more effort to make; and of that the success or the failure will be instantly communicated to Miss Beverley, by her eternally devoted, but half distracted

MORTIMER DELVILE.

Scarcely could Cecilia herself decide whether this comfortless letter or none at all were preferable. The implacability of Mr Delvile was shocking, but his slandering her character was still more intolerable; yet the praises of the mother, and her generous vindication, joined to the invariable reliance of Delvile upon her innocence, conferred upon her an honour that offered some alleviation.

The mention of a fabricator again brought Mr Monckton to her mind, and not all her unwillingness to think him capable of such treachery, could now root out her suspicions. Delvile's temper, however, she knew was too impetuous to be trusted with this conjecture, and her fear of committing injustice being thus seconded by prudence, she determined to keep to herself doubts that could not without danger be divulged.

She communicated briefly to Henrietta, who looked her earnest curiosity, the continuance of her suspense; and to her own fate Henrietta became somewhat more reconciled, when she saw that no station in life rendered happiness certain or permanent.

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Chapter x.

A RELATION.

ANOTHER week past still without any further intelligence. Cecilia was then summoned to the parlour, and to Delvile himself.

He looked hurried and anxious; yet the glow of his face, and the animation of his eyes, immediately declared he at least came not to take leave of her.

"Can you forgive," cried he, "the dismal and unsatisfactory letter I wrote you? I would not disobey

you twice in the same manner, and I could not till now have written in any other."

"The consultation with the physicians, then," said Cecilia, "is over?"

"Alas, yes; and the result is most alarming; they all agree my mother is in a dangerous way, and they rather forbear to oppose, than advise her going abroad: but upon that she is earnestly bent, and intends to set out without delay. I shall return to her, therefore, with all speed, and mean not to take any rest till I have seen her."

Cecilia expressed with tenderness her sorrow for Mrs Delvile: nor were her looks illiberal in including her son in her concern.

"I must hasten," he cried, "to the credentials by which I am authorised for coming, and I must hasten to prove if Miss Beverley has not flattered my mother in her appeal."

He then informed her that Mrs Delvile, apprehensive for herself, and softened for him by the confession of her danger, which she had extorted from her physicians, had tenderly resolved upon making one final effort for his happiness, and ill and impatient as she was, upon deferring her journey to wait its effect.

Generously, therefore, giving up her own resentment, she wrote to Mr Delvile in terms of peace and kindness, lamenting their late dissention, and ardently expressing her desire to be reconciled to him before she left England. She told him the uncertainty of her recovery which had been acknowledged by her physicians, who had declared a calmer mind was more essential to her than a purer air. She then added, that such serenity was only to be given her, by the removal of her anxiety at the comfortless state of her son. She begged him, therefore, to make known the author of Miss Beverley's defamation, assuring him, that upon

enquiry, he would find her character and her fame as unsullied as his own; and strongly representing, that after the sacrifice to which she had consented, their son would be utterly dishonourable in thinking of any other connexion. She then to this reasoning joined the most earnest supplication, protesting, in her present disordered state of health, her life might pay the forfeiture of her continual uneasiness.

"I held out," she concluded, "while his personal dignity, and the honour of his name and family were endangered; but where interest alone is concerned, and that interest is combated by the peace of his mind, and the delicacy of his word, my opposition is at an end. And though our extensive and well founded views for a splendid alliance are abolished, you will agree with me hereafter, upon a closer inspection, that the object for whom he relinquishes them, offers in herself the noblest reparation."

Cecilia felt gratified, humbled, animated and depressed at once by this letter, of which Delvile brought her a copy. "And what," cried she, "was the answer?"

"I cannot in decency," he replied, "speak my opinion of it: read it yourself,—and let me hear yours."

To the Honourable Mrs Delvile.

Your extraordinary letter, madam, has extremely surprised me. I had been willing to hope the affair over from the time my disapprobation of it was formally announced. I am sorry you are so much indisposed, but I cannot conclude your health would be restored by my acceding to a plan so derogatory to my house. I disapprove it upon every account, not only of the name and the fortune, but the lady herself. I have reasons more important than those I assign, but they are such as I am bound in honour not to mention. After such

a declaration, nobody, I presume, will affront me by asking them. Her defence you have only from herself, her accusation I have received from authority less partial. I command, therefore, that my son, upon pain of my eternal displeasure, may never speak to me on the subject again, and I hope, madam, from you the same complaisance to my request. I cannot explain myself further, nor is it necessary; it is no news, I flatter myself, to Mortimer Delvile or his mother, that I do nothing without reason, and I believe nothing upon slight grounds.

A few cold compliments concerning her journey, and the re-establishment of her health, concluded the letter.

Cecilia, having read, hastily returned it, and indignantly said, "My opinion, Sir, upon this letter, must surely be yours; that we had done wiser, long since, to have spared your mother and ourselves, those vain and fruitless conflicts which we ought better to have foreseen were liable to such a conclusion. Now, at least, let them be ended, and let us not pursue disgrace wilfully, after suffering from it with so much rigour involuntarily."

"O no," cried Delvile, "rather let us now spurn it for ever! those conflicts must indeed be ended, but not by a separation still more bitter than all of them."

He then told her, that his mother, highly offended to observe by the extreme coldness of this letter, the rancour he still nourished for the contest preceding her leaving him, no longer now refused even her separate consent, for a measure which she thought her son absolutely engaged to take.

"Good heaven!" cried Cecilia, much amazed, "this from Mrs Delvile!—a separate consent?"—

"She has always maintained," he answered, "an independent mind, always judged for herself, and re-

fused all other arbitration: when so impetuously she parted us, my father's will happened to be her's, and thence their concurrence: my father, of a temper immoveable and stern, retains stubbornly the prejudices which once have taken possession of him; my mother, generous as fiery, and noble as proud, is open to conviction, and no sooner convinced, than ingenuous in acknowledging it: and thence their dissention. From my father I may hope forgiveness, but must never expect concession; from my mother I may hope all she ought to grant, for pardon but her vehemence,—and she has every great quality that can dignify human nature!"

Cecilia, whose affection and reverence for Mrs Delvile were unfeigned, and who loved in her son this filial enthusiasm, readily concurred with him in praising her, and sincerely esteemed her the first among women.

"Now, then," cried he, with earnestness, "now is the time when your generous admiration of her is put to the test; see what she writes to you;—she has left to me all explanation: but I insisted upon some credential, lest you should believe I only owed her concurrence to a happy dream."

Cecilia in much trepidation took the letter, and hastily run it over.

To Miss Beverley.

Misery, my sweet young friend, has long been busy with us all; much have we owed to the clash of different interests, much to that rapacity which to enjoy any thing, demands every thing, and much to that general perverseness which labours to place happiness in what is with-held. Thus do we struggle on till we can struggle no longer; the felicity with which we trifle, at best is but temporary; and before reason and reflection shew

its value, sickness and sorrow are commonly become stationary.

Be it yours, my love, and my son's, to profit by the experience, while you pity the errors, of the many who illustrate this truth. Your mutual partiality has been mutually unfortunate, and must always continue so for the interests of both: but how blind is it to wait, in our own peculiar lots, for that perfection of enjoyment we can all see wanting in the lot of others! My expectations for my son had "outstepped the modesty of" probability. I looked for rank and high birth, *with the fortune of Cecilia, and Cecilia's rare character.* Alas! a new constellation in the heavens might as rationally have been looked for!

My extravagance, however, has been all for his felicity, dearer to me than life,—dearer to me than all things but his own honour! Let us but save that, and then let wealth, ambition, interest, grandeur and pride, since they cannot constitute his happiness, be removed from destroying it. I will no longer play the tyrant that, weighing good and evil by my own feelings and *opinions, insists upon his acting by the notions I have* formed, whatever misery they may bring him by opposing all his own.

I leave the kingdom with little reason to expect I shall return to it; I leave it——Oh blindness of vanity and passion!—from the effect of that violence with which so lately I opposed what now I am content to advance! But the extraordinary resignation to which you have agreed, shews your heart so wholly my son's, and so even more than worthy the whole possession of his, that it reflects upon him an honour more bright and more alluring, than any the most illustrious other alliance could now confer.

I would fain see you ere I go, lest I should see you no more; fain ratify by word of mouth the consent that

by word of mouth I so absolutely refused! I know not how to come to Suffolk,—is it not possible you can come to London? I am told you leave to me the arbitration of your fate,—in giving you to my son, I best shew my sense of such an honour.

Hasten then, my love, to town, that I may see you once more! wait no longer a concurrence thus unjustly with-held, but hasten, that I may bless the daughter I have so often wished to own! that I may entreat her forgiveness for all the pain I have occasioned her, and committing to her charge the future happiness of my son, fold to my maternal heart the two objects most dear to it! AUGUSTA DELVILE.

Cecilia wept over this letter with tenderness, grief and alarm; but declared, had it even summoned her to follow her abroad, she could not, after reading it, have hesitated in complying.

"O now, then," cried Delvile, "let our long suspenses end! hear me with the candour; my mother *has already listened to me—be mine, my Cecilia, at* once,—and force me not, by eternal scruples, to risk another separation."

"Good heaven, Sir!" cried Cecilia, starting, "in such a state as Mrs Delvile thinks herself, would you have her journey delayed?"

"No, not a moment! I would but ensure you mine, and go with her all over the world!"

"Wild and impossible!—and what is to be done with Mr Delvile?"

"It is on his account wholly I am thus earnestly precipitate. If I do not by an immediate marriage prevent his further interference, all I have already suffered may again be repeated, and some fresh contest with my mother may occasion another relapse."

Cecilia, who now understood him, ardently protested

she would not listen for a moment to any clandestine expedient.

He besought her to be patient; and then anxiously represented to her their peculiar situations. All application to his father he was peremptorily forbid making, all efforts to remove his prejudices their impenetrable mystery prevented; a public marriage, therefore, with such obstacles, would almost irritate him to phrenzy, by its daring defiance of his prohibition and authority.

"Alas!" exclaimed Cecilia, "we can never do right but in parting!"

"Say it not," cried he, "I conjure you! we shall yet live, I hope, to prove the contrary."

"And can you, then," cried she, reproachfully, "*Oh Mr Delvile! can you again urge me to enter your family in secret?*"

"I grieve, indeed," he answered, "that your goodness should so severely be tried; yet did you not condescend to commit the arbitration to my mother?"

"True; and I thought her approbation would secure my peace of mind; but how could I have expected Mrs Delvile's consent to such a scheme!?"

"She has merely accorded it from a certainty there is no other resource. Believe me, therefore, my whole hope rests upon your present compliance. My father, I am certain, by his letter, will now hear neither petition nor defence; on the contrary, he will only enrage at the temerity of offering to confute him. But when he knows you are his daughter, *his* honour will then be concerned in yours, and it will be as much his desire to have it cleared, as it is now to have it censured."

"Wait at least your return, and let us try what can be done with him."

"Oh why," cried Delvile, with much earnestness, "must I linger out month after month in this wretched

uncertainty! If I wait I am undone! my father, by the orders I must unavoidably leave, will discover the preparations making without his consent, and he will work upon you in my absence, and compel you to give me up!"

"Are you sure," said she, half smiling, "he would have so much power?"

"I am but too sure, that the least intimation, in his present irritable state of mind, reaching him of my intentions, would make him not scruple, in his fury, pronouncing some malediction upon my disobedience that *neither* of us, I must own, could tranquilly disregard."

This was an argument that came home to Cecilia, whose deliberation upon it, though silent, was evidently not unfavourable.

He then told her that with respect to settlements, he would instantly have a bond drawn up, similar to that prepared for their former intended union, which should be properly signed and sealed, and by which he would engage himself to make, upon coming to his estate, the same settlement upon her that was made upon his mother.

"And as, instead of keeping up three houses," he continued, "in the manner my father does at present, I mean to put my whole estate *out to nurse*, while we reside for a while abroad, or in the country, I doubt not but in a very few years we shall be as rich and as easy as we shall desire."

He told her, also, of his well-founded expectations from the Relations already mentioned; which the concurrence of his mother with his marriage would thence forward secure to him.

He then, with more coherence, stated his plan at large. He purposed, without losing a moment, to return to London; he conjured her, in the name of his

mother, to set out herself early the next day, that the following evening might be dedicated wholly to Mrs Delvile: through her intercession he might then hope Cecilia's compliance, and every thing on the morning after should be prepared for their union. The long-desired ceremony over, he would instantly ride post to his father, and pay him, at least, the respect of being the first to communicate it. He would then attend his mother to the Continent, and leave the arrangement of everything to his return. "Still, therefore, as a single man," he continued, "I mean to make the journey, and I shall take care, by the time I return, to have all things in readiness for claiming my sweet Bride. Tell me, then, now, if you can reasonably oppose this plan?"

"Indeed," said Cecilia, after some hesitation, "I cannot see the necessity of such violent precipitancy."

"Do you not try me too much," cried Delvile, impatiently, "to talk *now* of precipitancy! after such painful waiting, such wearisome expectation! I ask you not to involve your own affairs in confusion by accompanying me abroad; sweet to me as would be such an indulgence, I would not make a run-away of you in the opinion of the world. All I wish is the secret certainty I cannot be robbed of you, that no cruel machinations may again work our separation, that you are mine, unalterably mine, beyond the power of caprice or ill fortune."

Cecilia made no answer; tortured with irresolution, she knew not upon what to determine.

"We might then, according to the favour or displeasure of my father, settle wholly abroad for the present, or occasionally visit him in England; my mother would be always and openly our friend.——Oh be firm, then, I conjure you, to the promise you have given her, and deign to be mine on the conditions she

prescribes. She will be bound to you for ever by so generous a concession, and even her health may be restored by the cessation of her anxieties. With such a wife, such a mother, what will be wanting for *me!* Could I lament not being richer, I must be rapacious indeed!—Speak, then, my Cecilia! relieve me from the agony of this eternal uncertainty, and tell me your word is invariable as your honour, and tell me my mother gives not her sanction in vain!"

Cecilia sighed deeply, but, after some hesitation, said, "I little knew what I had promised, nor know I now what to perform!—there must ever, I find, be some check to human happiness! yet, since upon these terms, Mrs Delvile herself is content to wish me of her family—"

She stopt; but, urged earnestly by Delvile, added "I must not, I think, withdraw the powers with which I entrusted her."

Delvile, grateful and enchanted, now forgot his haste and his business, and lost every wish but to re-animate her spirits; she compelled him, however, to leave her, that his visit might less be wondered at, and sent by him a message to Mrs Delvile, that, wholly relying upon her wisdom, she implicitly submitted to her decree.

Chapter xj.

AN INTERPRISE.

CECILIA now had no time for afterthoughts or anxious repentance, since notwithstanding the hurry of her spirits, and the confusion of her mind, she had too much real business, to yield to pensive indulgence.

Averse to all falsehood, she invented none upon this occasion; she merely told her guests she was summoned to London upon an affair of importance; and though she saw their curiosity, not being at liberty to satisfy it with the truth, she attempted not to appease it by fiction, but quietly left it to its common fate, conjecture. She would gladly have made Henrietta the companion of her journey, but Henrietta was the last to whom that journey could give pleasure. She only, therefore, took her maid in the chaise, and, attended by one servant on horseback, at six o'clock the next morning, she quitted her mansion, to enter into an engagement by which soon she was to resign it for ever.

Disinterested as she was, she considered her situation as peculiarly perverse, that from the time of her coming to a fortune which most others regarded as enviable, she had been a stranger to peace, a fruitless seeker of happiness, a dupe to the fraudulent, and a prey to the needy! the little comfort she had received, had been merely from dispensing it, and now only had she any chance of being happy herself, when upon the point of relinquishing what all others built their happiness upon obtaining!

These reflections only gave way to others still more disagreeable; she was now a second time engaged in a transaction she could not approve, and suffering the whole peace of her future life to hang upon an action dark, private and imprudent: an action by which the liberal kindness of her late uncle would be annulled, by which the father of her intended husband would be disobeyed, and which already, in a similar instance, had brought her to affliction and disgrace. These melancholy thoughts haunted her during the whole journey, and though the assurance of Mrs Delvile's approbation was some relief to her uneasiness, she involuntarily prepared herself for meeting new mortifications, and was

tormented with an apprehension that this second attempt made her merit them.

She drove immediately, by the previous direction of Delvile, to a lodging-house in Albemarle Street, which he had taken care to have prepared for her reception. She then sent for a chair, and went to Mrs Delvile's. Her being seen by the servants of that house was not very important, as their master was soon to be acquainted with the real motive of her journey.

She was shewn into a parlour, while Mrs Delvile was informed of her arrival, and there flown to by Delvile with the most grateful eagerness. Yet she saw in his countenance that all was not well, and heard upon enquiry that his mother was considerably worse.

Extremely shocked by this intelligence, she already began to lament her unfortunate enterprise. Delvile struggled, by exerting his own spirits, to restore hers, but forced gaiety is never exhilarating; and, full of care and anxiety, he was ill able to appear sprightly and easy.

They were soon summoned upstairs into the apartment of Mrs Delvile, who was lying upon a couch, pale, weak, and much altered. Delvile led the way, saying, "Here, madam, comes one whose sight will bring peace and pleasure to you!"

"This, indeed," cried Mrs Delvile, half rising and embracing her, "is the form in which they are most welcome to me! virtuous, noble Cecilia! what honour you do my son! with what joy, should I ever recover, shall I assist him in paying the gratitude he owes you!"

Cecilia, grieved at her situation, and affected by her kindness, could only answer with her tears; which, however, were not shed alone; for Delvile's eyes were full, as he passionately exclaimed, "This, this is the sight my heart has thus long desired! the wife of my

choice taken to the bosom of the parent I revere! be yet but well, my beloved mother, and I will be thankful for every calamity that has led to so sweet a conclusion!"

"Content yourself, however, my son, with one of us," cried Mrs Delvile, smiling; "and content yourself, if you can, though your hard lot should make that one this creature of full bloom, health, and youth! Ah, my love," added she, more seriously, and addressing the still weeping Cecilia, "should now Mortimer, in losing me, lose those cares by which alone, for some months past, my life has been rendered tolerable, how peaceably shall I resign him to one so able to recompense his filial patience and services!"

This was not a speech to stop the tears of Cecilia, though such warmth of approbation quieted her conscientious scruples. Delvile now earnestly interfered; he told her that his mother had been ordered not to talk or exert herself, and entreated her to be composed, and his mother to be silent.

"Be it *your* business, then," said Mrs Delvile, more gaily, "to find us entertainment. We will promise to be very still if you will take that trouble upon yourself."

"I will not," answered he, "be rallied from my purpose; if I cannot entertain, it will be something to weary you, for that may incline you to take rest, which will be answering a better purpose."

"Mortimer," returned she, "is this the ingenuity of duty or of love? and which are you just now thinking of, my health, or a conversation uninterrupted with Miss Beverley?"

"Perhaps a little of both!" said he, chearfully, though colouring.

"But you rather meant it should pass," said Mrs Delvile, "you were thinking only of me? I have

always observed, that where one scheme answers two purposes, the ostensive is never the purpose most at heart."

"Why it is but common prudence," answered Delvile, "to feel our way a little before we mention what we most wish, and so cast the hazard of the refusal upon something rather less important."

"Admirably settled!" cried Mrs Delvile: "so my rest is but to prove Miss Beverley's disturbance!—Well, it is only anticipating our future way of life, when her disturbance, in taking the management of you to herself, will of course prove my rest."

She then quietly reposed herself, and Delvile discoursed with Cecilia upon their future plans, hopes and actions.

He meant to set off from the church-door to Delvile Castle, to acquaint his father with his marriage, and then to return instantly to London: there he entreated Cecilia to stay with his mother, that, finding them both together, he might not exhaust her patience, by making his parting visit occasion another journey to Suffolk.

But here Cecilia resolutely opposed him; saying, her only chance to escape discovery, was going instantly to her own house; and representing so earnestly her desire that their marriage should be unknown till his return to England, upon a thousand motives of delicacy, propriety, and fearfulness, that the obligation he owed already to a compliance which he saw grew more and more reluctant, restrained him both in gratitude and pity from persecuting her further. Neither would she consent to seeing him in Suffolk; which could but delay his mother's journey, and expose her to unnecessary suspicions; she promised, however, to write to him often, and as, from his mother's weakness, he must travel very slowly, she took a plan of his route, and

engaged that he should find a letter from her at every great town.

The bond which he had already had altered, he insisted upon leaving in her own custody, averse to applying to Mr Monckton, whose behaviour to him had before given him disgust, and in whom Cecilia herself no longer wished to confide. He had again applied to the same lawyer, Mr Singleton, to give her away; for though to his secrecy he had no tie, he had still less to any entire stranger. Mrs Delvile was too ill to attend them to church, nor would Delvile have desired from her such absolute defiance of his father.

Cecilia now gave another sigh to her departed friend Mrs Charlton, whose presence upon this awful occasion would else again have soothed and supported her. She had no female friend in whom she could rely; but feeling a repugnance invincible to being accompanied only by men, she accepted the attendance of Mrs Delvile's own woman, who had lived many years in the family, and was high in the favour and confidence of her lady.

The arrangement of these and other articles, with occasional interruptions from Mrs Delvile, fully employed the evening. Delvile would not trust again to meeting her at the church; but begged her to send out her servants between seven and eight o'clock in the morning, at which time he would himself call for her with a chair.

She went away early, that Mrs Delvile might go to rest, and it was mutually agreed they should risk no meeting the next day. Delvile conjured them to part with firmness and chearfulness, and Cecilia, fearing her own emotion, would have retired without bidding her adieu. But Mrs Delvile, calling after her, said, "Take with you my blessing!" and tenderly embracing her, added, "My son, as my chief nurse, claims a pre-

scriptive right to govern me, but I will break from his control to tell my sweet Cecilia what ease and what delight she has already given to my mind! my best hope of recovery is founded on the pleasure I anticipate in witnessing your mutual happiness: but should my illness prove fatal, and that felicity be denied me, my greatest earthly care is already removed by the security I feel of Mortimer's future peace. Take with you, then, my blessing, for you are become one to me! long daughter of my affection, now wife of my darling son! love her, Mortimer, as she merits, and cherish her with tenderest gratitude!—banish, sweetest Cecilia, every apprehension that oppresses you, and receive in Mortimer Delvile a husband that will revere your virtues, and dignify your choice!"

She then embraced her again, and seeing that her heart was too full for speech, suffered her to go without making any answer. Delvile attended her to her chair, scarce less moved than herself, and found only opportunity to entreat her punctuality the next morning.

She had, indeed, no inclination to fail in her appointment, or risk the repetition of scenes so affecting, or situations so alarming. Mrs Delvile's full approbation somewhat restored to her her own, but nothing could remove the fearful anxiety, which still privately tormented her with expectations of another disappointment.

The next morning she arose with the light, and calling all her courage to her aid, determined to consider this day as decisive of her destiny with regard to Delvile, and, rejoicing that at least all suspense would be over, to support herself with fortitude, be that destiny what it might.

At the appointed time she sent her maid to visit Mrs Hill, and gave some errands to her man that carried him to a distant part of the town: but she charged them both to return to the lodgings by nine o'clock, at

which hour she ordered a chaise for returning into the country.

Delvile, who was impatiently watching for their quitting the house, only waited till they were out of sight, to present himself at the door. He was shewn into a parlour, where she instantly attended him; and being told that the clergyman, Mr Singleton, and Mrs Delvile's woman, were already in the church, she gave him her hand in silence, and he led her to the chair.

The calmness of stifled hope had now taken place in Cecilia of quick sensations and alarm. Occupied with a firm belief she should never be the wife of Delvile, she only waited, with a desperate sort of patience, to see when and by whom she was next to be parted from him.

When they arrived near the church, Delvile stopt the chair. He handed Cecilia out of it, and discharging the chairmen, conducted her into the church. He was surprised himself at her composure, but earnestly wishing it to last, took care not to say to her a word that should make any answer from her necessary.

He gave her, as before, to Mr Singleton, secretly praying that not, as before, she might be given him in vain: Mrs Delvile's woman attended her; the clergyman was ready, and they all proceeded to the altar.

The ceremony was begun; Cecilia, rather mechanically than with consciousness, appearing to listen to it: but at the words, *If any man can shew any just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together*, Delvile himself shook with terror, lest some concealed person should again answer it, and Cecilia, with a sort of steady dismay in her countenance, cast her eyes round the church, with no other view than that of seeing from what corner the prohibiter would start.

She looked, however, to no purpose; no prohibiter appeared, the ceremony was performed without any

interruption, and she received the thanks of Delvile, and the congratulations of the little set, before the idea which had so strongly pre-occupied her imagination, was sufficiently removed from it to satisfy her she was really married.

They then went to the vestry, where their business was not long; and Delvile again put Cecilia into a chair, which again he accompanied on foot.

Her sensibility now soon returned, though still attended with strangeness and a sensation of incredulity. But the sight of Delvile at her lodgings, contrary to their agreement, wholly recovered her senses from the stupor which had dulled them. He came, however, but to acknowledge how highly she had obliged him, to see her himself restored to the animation natural to her character, and to give her a million of charges, resulting from anxiety and tenderness. And then, fearing the return of her servants, he quitted her, and set out for Delvile Castle.

The amazement of Cecilia was still unconquerable; to be actually united with Delvile! to be his with the full consent of his mother,—to have him her's, beyond the power of his father,—she could not reconcile it with possibility; she fancied it a dream,—but a dream from which she wished not to wake.

BOOK X.

Chapter j.

A DISCOVERY.

CECILIA'S journey back to the country was as safe and free from interruption as her journey had been to town, and all that distinguished them was what passed in her own mind: the doubts, apprehensions, and desponding suspense which had accompanied her setting out, were now all removed, and certainty, ease, the expectation of happiness, and the cessation of all perplexity, had taken their place. She had nothing left to dread but the inflexibility of Mr Delvile, and hardly any thing even to hope but the recovery of his lady.

Her friends at her return expressed their wonder at her expedition, but their wonder at what occasioned it, though still greater, met no satisfaction. Henrietta rejoiced in her sight, though her absence had been so short; and Cecilia, whose affection with her pity increased, intimated to her the event for which she wished her to prepare herself, and frankly acknowledged she had reason to expect it would soon take place.

Henrietta endeavoured with composure to receive this intelligence, and to return such a mark of confidence with chearful congratulations: but her fortitude was unequal to an effort so heroic, and her character was too simple to assume a greatness she felt not: she

sighed and changed colour; and hastily quitted the room that she might sob aloud in another.

Warm-hearted, tender, and susceptible, her affections were all undisguised: struck with the elegance of Delvile, and enchanted by his services to her brother, she had lost to him her heart at first without missing it, and, when missed, without seeking to reclaim it. The hopelessness of such a passion she never considered, nor asked herself its end, or scarce suspected its aim; it was pleasant to her at the time, and she looked not to the future, but fed it with visionary schemes, and soothed it with voluntary fancies. Now she knew all was over, she felt the folly she had committed, but though sensibly and candidly angry at her own error, its conviction offered nothing but sorrow to succeed it.

The felicity of Cecilia, whom she loved, admired and revered, she wished with the genuine ardour of zealous sincerity; but that Delvile, the very cause and sole subject of her own personal unhappiness, should himself constitute that felicity, was too much for her spirits, and seemed to her mortified mind too cruel in her destiny.

Cecilia, who in the very vehemence of her sorrow saw its innocence, was too just and too noble to be offended by it, or impute to the bad passions of envy or jealousy, the artless regret of an untutored mind. To be penetrated too deeply with the merit of Delvile, with her wanted no excuse, and she grieved for her situation with but little mixture of blame, and none of surprise. She redoubled her kindness and caresses with the hope of consoling her, but ventured to trust her no further, till reflection, and her natural good sense, should better enable her to bear an explanation.

Nor was this friendly exertion any longer a hardship to her; the sudden removal, in her own feelings and affairs, of distress and expectation, had now so much

lightened her heart, that she could spare without repining, some portion of its spirit to her dejected young friend.

But an incident happened two mornings after which called back, and most unpleasantly, her attention to herself. She was told that Mrs Matt, the poor woman she had settled in Bury, begged an audience, and upon sending for her up stairs, and desiring to know what she could do for her, "Nothing, madam, just now," she answered, "for I don't come upon my own business, but to tell some news to you, madam. You bid me never take notice of the wedding, that was to be, and I'm sure I never opened my mouth about it from that time to this; but I have found out who it was put a stop to it, and so I come to tell you."

Cecilia, extremely amazed, eagerly desired her to go on.

"Why, madam, I don't know the gentlewoman's name quite right yet, but I can tell you where she lives, for I knew her as soon as I set eyes on her, when I see her at church last Sunday, and I would have followed her home, but she went into a coach, and I could not walk fast enough; but I asked one of the footmen where she lived, and he said at the great house at the Grove: and perhaps, madam, you may know where that is: and then he told me her name, but that I can't just now think of."

"Good heaven!" cried Cecilia,——"it could not be Bennet?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's the very name; I know it again now I hear it."

Cecilia then hastily dismissed her, first desiring her not to mention the circumstance to any body.

Shocked and dismayed, she now saw, but saw with horror, the removal of all her doubts, and the explanation of all her difficulties, in the full and irrefragable

discovery of the perfidy of her oldest friend and confident.

Miss Bennet herself she regarded in the affair as a mere tool, which, though in effect it did the work, was innocent of its mischief, because powerless but in the hand of its employer.

"That employer," cried she, "must be Mr Monckton! Mr Monckton whom so long I have known, who so willingly has been my counsellor, so ably my instructor! in whose integrity I have confided, upon whose friendship I have relied! my succour in all emergencies, my guide in all perplexities!—— Mr *Monckton* thus dishonourably, thus barbarously to betray me! to turn against me the very confidence I had reposed in his regard for me! and make use of my own trust to furnish the means to injure me!"——

She was now wholly confirmed that he had wronged her with Mr Delvile; she could not have two enemies so malignant without provocation, and he who so unfeelingly could dissolve a union at the very altar, could alone have the baseness to calumniate her so cruelly.

Evil thoughts thus awakened, stopt not merely upon facts; conjecture carried her further, and conjecture built upon probability. The officiousness of Morrice in pursuing her to London, his visiting her when there, and his following and watching Delvile, she now reasonably concluded were actions directed by Mr Monckton, whose house he had but just left, and whose orders, whatever they might be, she was almost certain he would obey. Availing himself, therefore, of the forwardness and suppleness which met in this young man, she doubted not but his intelligence had contributed to acquaint him with her proceedings.

The motive of such deep concerted and accumulated treachery was next to be sought: nor was the search long; one only could have tempted him to schemes so

hazardous and costly; and, unsuspicious as she was, she now saw into his whole design.

Long accustomed to regard him as a safe and disinterested old friend, the respect with which, as a child, she had looked up to him, she had insensibly preserved when a woman. That respect had taught her to consider his notice as a favour, and far from suspiciously shunning, she had innocently courted it: and his readiness in advising and tutoring her, his frank and easy friendliness of behaviour, had kept his influence unimpaired, by preventing its secret purpose from being detected.

But now the whole mystery was revealed; his aversion to the Delviles, to which hitherto she had attributed all she disapproved in his behaviour, she was convinced must be inadequate to stimulate him to such lengths. That aversion itself was by this late surmise accounted for, and no sooner did it occur to her, than a thousand circumstances confirmed it.

The first among these was the evident ill will of Lady Margaret, which though she had constantly imputed to the general irascibility for which her character was notorious, she had often wondered to find impenetrable to all endeavours to please or soften her. His care of her fortune, his exhortations against her expences, his wish to make her live with Mr Briggs, all contributed to point out the selfishness of his attentions, which in one instance rendered visible, became obvious in every other.

Yet various as were the incidents that now poured upon her memory to his disgrace, not one among them took its rise from his behaviour to herself, which always had been scrupulously circumspect, or if for a moment unguarded, only at a season when her own distress or confusion had prevented her from perceiving it. This recollection almost staggered her suspicions; yet so ab-

solute seemed the confirmation they received from every other, that her doubt was overpowered, and soon wholly extinguished.

She was yet ruminating upon this subject, when word was brought her that Mr Monckton was in the parlour.

Mingled disgust and indignation made her shudder at his name, and without pausing a moment, she sent him word she was engaged, and could not possibly leave her room.

Astonished by such a dismission, he left the house in the utmost confusion. But Cecilia could not endure to see him, after a discovery of such hypocrisy and villainy.

She considered, however, that the matter could not rest here: he would demand an explanation, and perhaps, by his unparalleled address, again contrive to seem innocent, notwithstanding appearances were at present so much against him. Expecting, therefore, some artifice, and determined not to be duped by it, she sent again for the Pew-opener, to examine her more strictly.

The woman was out at work in a private family, and could not come till the evening: but, when further questioned, the description she gave of Miss Bennet was too exact to be disputed.

She then desired her to call again the next morning: and sent a servant to the Grove, with her compliments to Miss Bennet, and a request that she might send her carriage for her the next day, at any time she pleased, as she wished much to speak with her.

This message, she was aware, might create some suspicion, and put her upon her guard; but she thought, nevertheless, a sudden meeting with the Pew-opener, whom she meant abruptly to confront with her, would baffle the security of any previously settled scheme.

To a conviction such as this even Mr Monckton must submit, and since he was lost to her as a friend, she might at least save herself the pain of keeping up *his acquaintance.*

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Chapter ij.

AN INTERVIEW.

THE servant did not return till it was dark; and then, with a look of much dismay, said he had been able to meet with nobody who could either give or take a message; that the Grove was all in confusion, and the whole country in an uproar, for Mr *Monckton, just as he arrived, had been brought home* dead!

Cecilia screamed with involuntary horror; a pang like remorse seized her mind, with the apprehension she had some share in this catastrophe, and innocent as she was either of *his fall or his crimes,* she no sooner heard he was no more, than she forgot he had offended her, and reproached herself with severity for the shame to which she meant to expose him the next morning.

Dreadfully disturbed by this horrible incident, she entreated Mrs Harrel and Henrietta to sup by themselves, and going into her own room, determined to *write the whole affair to Delvile, in a letter she should* direct to be left at the post-office for him at Margate.

And here strongly she felt the happiness of being actually his wife; she could now without reserve make him acquainted with all her affairs, and tell to the master *of her heart every emotion that entered it.*

While engaged in this office, the very action of which quieted her, a letter was brought her from Delvile himself. She received it with gratitude and opened it with

joy; he had promised to write soon, but *so* soon she had thought impossible.

The reading took not much time; the letter contained but the following words:

To Miss Beverley.

My Cecilia!—Be alone, I conjure you; dismiss every body, and admit me this moment!

Great was her astonishment at this note! no name to it, no conclusion, the characters indistinct, the writing crooked, the words so few, and those few scarce legible!

He desired to see her, and to see her alone; she could not hesitate in her compliance,—but whom could she dismiss?—her servants, if ordered away, would but be curiously upon the watch,—she could think of no expedient, she was all hurry and amazement.

She asked if any one waited for an answer? The footman said no; that the note was given in by somebody who did not speak, and who ran out of sight the moment he had delivered it.

She could not doubt this was Delvile himself,—Delvile who should now be just returned from the castle to his mother, and whom she had thought not even a letter would reach if directed any where nearer than Margate!

All she could devise in obedience to him, was to go and wait for him alone in her dressing-room, giving orders that if any one called they might be immediately brought up to her, as she expected somebody upon business, with whom she must not be interrupted.

This was extremely disagreeable to her; yet, contrary as it was to their agreement, she felt no inclination to reproach Delvile; the abruptness of his note, the evident hand-shaking with which it had been written,

the strangeness of the request in a situation such as theirs,—all concurred to assure her he came not to her idly, and all led her to apprehend he came to her with evil tidings.

What they might be, she had no time to conjecture; a servant, in a few minutes, opened the dressing-room door, and said, "Ma'am, a gentleman;" and Delvile, abruptly entering, shut it himself, in his eagerness to get rid of him.

At his sight, her prognostication of ill became stronger! she went forward to meet him, and he advanced to her smiling and in haste; but that smile did not well do its office; it concealed not a pallid countenance, in which every feature spoke horror; it disguised not an aching heart, which almost visibly throbbed with intolerable emotion! Yet he addressed her in terms of tenderness and peace; but his tremulous voice counteracted his words, and spoke that all within was tumult and war!

Cecilia, amazed, affrighted, had no power to hasten an explanation, which, on his own part, he seemed unable, or fearful to begin. He talked to her of his happiness in again seeing her before he left the kingdom, entreated her to write to him continually, said the same thing two and three times in a breath, began with one subject, and seemed unconscious he wandered presently into another, and asked her questions innumerable about her health, journey, affairs, and ease of mind, without hearing from her any answer, or seeming to miss that she had none.

Cecilia grew dreadfully terrified; something strange and most alarming she was sure must have happened, but *what*, she had no means to know, nor courage, nor even words to enquire.

Delvile, at length, the first hurry of his spirits abating, became more coherent and considerate: and

looking anxiously at her, said, "Why this silence, my Cecilia?"

"I know not!" said she, endeavouring to recover herself, "but your coming was unexpected: I was just writing to you at Margate."

"Write still, then; but direct to Ostend; I shall be quicker than the post; and I would not lose a letter—a line—a word from you, for all the world can offer me!"

"Quicker than the post?" cried Cecilia; "but how can Mrs Delvile—" she stopt; not knowing what she might venture to ask.

"She is now on the road to Margate; I hope to be there to receive her. I mean but to bid you adieu, and be gone."

Cecilia made no answer; she was more and more astonished, more and more confounded.

"You are thoughtful?" said he, with tenderness; "are you unhappy?—sweetest Cecilia! most excellent of human creatures! if I have made you unhappy—and I must!—it is inevitable!—"

"Oh Delvile!" cried she, now assuming more courage, "why will you not speak to me openly?—something, I see, is wrong; may I not hear it? may I not tell you, at least, my concern that any thing has distressed you?"

"You are too good!" cried he; "to deserve you is not possible,—but to afflict you is inhuman!"

"Why so?" cried she, more chearfully; "must I not share the common lot? or expect the whole world to be new modelled, lest I should meet in it any thing but happiness?"

"There is not, indeed, much danger! Have you pen and ink here?"

She brought them to him immediately, with paper.

"You have been writing to me, you say?—I will begin a letter myself."

"To me?" cried she.

He made no answer, but took up the pen, and wrote a few words, and then, flinging it down, said, "Fool!—I could have done this without coming!"

"May I look at it?" said she; and, finding he made no opposition, advanced and read.

I fear to alarm you by rash precipitation,—I fear to alarm you by lingering suspense,—but all is not well—

"Fear nothing!" cried she, turning to him with the kindest earnestness; "tell me, whatever it may be!—Am I not your wife? bound by every tie divine and human to share in all your sorrows, if, unhappily, I cannot mitigate them!"

"Since you allow me," cried he, gratefully, "so sweet a claim, a claim to which all others yield, and which if you repent not giving me, will make all others nearly immaterial to me,—I will own to you that all, indeed, is not well! I have been hasty,—you will blame me; I deserve, indeed, to be blamed!—entrusted with your peace and happiness, to suffer rage, resentment, violence, to make me forego what I owed to such a deposite!—If your blame, however, stops short of repentance—but it cannot!"

"What, then," cried she with warmth, "must you have done? for there is not an action of which I believe you capable, there is not an event which I believe to be possible, that can ever make me repent belonging to you wholly!"

"Generous, condescending Cecilia!" cried he; "Words such as these, hung there not upon me an evil the most depressing, would be almost more than I could bear—would make me too blest for mortality!"

"But words such as these," said she more gaily, "I might long have coquetted ere I had spoken, had

you not drawn them from me by this alarm. Take, therefore, the good with the ill, and remember, if all does not go right, you have now a trusty friend, as willing to be the partner of your serious as your happiest hours."

"*Shew but as much firmness as you have shewn* sweetness," cried he, "and I will fear to tell you nothing."

She reiterated her assurances; they then both sat down, and he began his account.

"Immediately from your lodgings I went where I had ordered a chaise, and stopped only to change horses till I reached Delvile Castle. My father saw me with surprise, and received me with coldness. I was compelled by my situation to be abrupt, and told him I came, before I accompanied my mother abroad, to make *him acquainted with an affair which I thought myself* bound in duty and respect to suffer no one to communicate to him but myself. He then sternly interrupted me, and declared in high terms, that if this affair concerned *you*, he would not listen to it. I attempted to remonstrate upon this injustice, when he passionately broke forth into new and horrible charges against you, affirming that he had them from authority as indisputable as ocular demonstration. I was then certain of some foul play."—

"Foul play indeed!" cried Cecilia, who now knew but too well by whom she had been injured. "Good heaven, how have I been deceived, where most I have trusted!"

"I told him," continued Delvile, "some gross imposition had been practiced upon him, and earnestly conjured him no longer to conceal from me by whom. This, unfortunately, encreased his rage; imposition, he said, was not so easily played upon him, he left that for *me* who so readily was duped; while for himself, he had only given credit to a man of much consideration

in Suffolk, who had known you from a child, who had solemnly assured him he had repeatedly endeavoured to reclaim you, who had rescued you from the hands of Jews at his own hazard and loss, and who actually shewed him bonds acknowledging immense debts, which were signed with your own hand."

"*Horrible!*" exclaimed Cecilia, "I believed not such guilt and perfidy possible!"

"I was scarce myself," resumed Delvile, "while I heard him: I demanded even with fierceness his author, whom I scrupled not to execrate as he deserved; he coldly answered he was bound by an oath never to reveal him, nor should he repay his honourable attention to his family by a breach of his own word, were it even less formally engaged. I then lost all patience; to mention honour, I cried, was a farce, where such infamous calumnies were listened to;—but let me not shock you unnecessarily, you may readily conjecture what passed."

"Ah me!" cried Cecilia, "you have then quarrelled with your father!"

"I have!" said he; "nor does he yet know I am married: in so much wrath there was no room for narration; I only pledged myself by all I held sacred, never to rest till I had cleared your fame, by the detection of this villainy, and then left him without further explanation."

"Oh return, then, to him directly!" cried Cecilia, "he is your father, you are bound to bear with his displeasure;—alas! had you never known me, you had never incurred it!"

"Believe me," he answered, "I am ill at ease under it: if you wish it, when you have heard me, I will go to him immediately; if not, I will write, and you shall yourself dictate what."

Cecilia thanked him, and begged he would continue his account.

"My first step, when I left the Castle, was to send a letter to my mother, in which I entreated her to set out as soon as possible for Margate, as I was detained from her unavoidably, and was unwilling my delay should either retard our journey, or oblige her to travel faster. At Margate I hoped to be as soon as herself, if not before her."

"And why," cried Cecilia, "did you not go to town as you had promised, and accompany her?"

"I had business another way. I came hither."

"Directly?"

"No; but soon."

"Where did you go first?"

"My Cecilia, it is now you must summon your fortitude: I *left my father without an explanation on my* part;—but not till, in his rage of asserting his authority, he had unwarily named his informant."

"Well!"

"That informant—the most deceitful of men!—was your long pretended friend, Mr Monckton!"

"So I feared!" said Cecilia, whose blood now ran cold through her veins with sudden and new apprehensions.

"I rode to the Grove, on hack-horses, and on a *full* gallop the whole way. I got to him early in the evening. I was shewn into his library. I told him my errand.—You look pale, my love? You are not well?—"

Cecilia, too sick for speech, leant her head upon a table. Delvile was going to call for help; but she put her hand upon his arm to stop him, and, perceiving she was only mentally affected, he rested, and endeavoured by every possible means to revive her.

After a while, she again raised her head, faintly saying, "I am sorry I interrupted you; but the conclusion I already know,—Mr Monckton is dead!"

"Not dead," cried he; "dangerously, indeed, wounded, but thank heaven, not actually dead!"

"Not dead?" cried Cecilia, with recruited strength and spirits, "Oh then all yet may be well!—if he is *not dead, he may recover!*"

"He may; I hope he will!"

"Now, then," she cried, "tell me all: I can bear any intelligence but of death by human means."

"I meant not to have gone such lengths; far from it; I hold duels in abhorrence, as unjustifiable acts of violence, and savage devices of revenge. I have offended against my own conviction,—but, transported with passion at his infamous charges, I was not master of my reason; I accused him of his perfidy; he denied it; I told him I had it from my father,—he changed the subject to pour abuse upon him; I insisted on a recantation to clear you; he asked by what right? I fiercely answered, by a husband's! His countenance, then, explained at least the motives of his treachery,—he loves you himself! he had probably schemed to keep you free till his wife died, and then concluded his machinations would secure you his own. For this purpose, finding he was in danger of losing you, he was content even to blast your character, rather than suffer you to escape him! But the moment I acknowledged my marriage he grew more furious than myself; and, in short—for why relate the frenzies of rage? we walked out together; my travelling pistols were already charged; I gave him his choice of them, and, the challenge being mine, for insolence joined with guilt had robbed me of all forbearance, he fired first, but missed me: I then demanded whether he would clear your fame? he called out 'Fire! I will make no terms,'—I did fire,—and unfortunately aimed better! We had neither of us any second, all was the result of immediate passion; but I soon got people to him, and

assisted in conveying him home. He was at first believed to be dead, and I was seized by his servants; but he afterwards shewed signs of life, and by sending for my friend Biddulph, I was released. Such is the melancholy transaction I came to relate to you, flattering myself it would something less shock you from me than from another: yet my own real concern for the affair, the repentance with which from the moment the wretch fell, I was struck in being his destroyer, and the sorrow, the remorse, rather, which I felt, in coming to wound you with such black, such fearful intelligence, —you to whom all I owe is peace and comfort!—— these thoughts gave me so much disturbance, that, in fact, I knew less than any other how to prepare you for such a tale."

He stopt; but Cecilia could say nothing: to censure him now would both be cruel and vain; yet to pretend she was satisfied with his conduct, would be doing violence to her judgment and veracity. She saw, too, that his error had sprung wholly from a generous ardor in her defence, and that his confidence in her character, had resisted, without wavering, every attack that menaced it. For this she felt truly grateful; yet his quarrel with his father,—the danger of his mother,— his necessary absence,—her own clandestine situation, —and more than all, the threatened death of Mr Monckton by his hands, were circumstances so full of dread and sadness, she knew not upon which to speak, —how to offer him comfort,—how to assume a countenance that looked able to receive any, or by what means to repress the emotions which so many ways assailed her. Delvile, having vainly waited some reply, then in a tone the most melancholy, said, "If it is yet possible you can be sufficiently interested in my fate to care what becomes of me, aid me now with your counsel, or rather with your instructions; I am scarce able to think

for myself, and to be thought for by you, would yet be a consolation that would give me spirit for any thing."

Cecilia, *starting from her reverie,* repeated, "To care what becomes of you? Oh Delvile!—make not *my heart bleed by words of such unkindness!*"

"Forgive me," cried he, "I meant not a reproach; I *meant but to state my own consciousness* how little I deserve from you. You talked to me of going to my *father? do you still wish it?*"

"I think so!" cried she; too much disturbed to *know what she said, yet fearing again to hurt him* by making him wait her answer.

"I will go then," said he, "without doubt: too happy to be guided by you, which-ever way I steer. I have now, indeed much to tell him; but whatever may be his wrath, there is little fear, at this time, that my own temper cannot bear it! what next shall I do?"

"What next?" repeated she; "indeed I know not!"

"Shall I go immediately to Margate? or shall I first ride hither?"

"If you please," said she, much perturbed, and deeply sighing.

"I please nothing but by your direction, to follow that is my only chance of pleasure. Which, then, shall I do?—you will not, now, refuse to direct me?"

"No, certainly, not for the world!"

"Speak to me, then, my love, and tell me;—why are you thus silent?—is it painful to you to counsel me?"

"No, indeed!" said she, putting her hand to her head, "I will speak to you in a few minutes."

"Oh my Cecilia!" cried he, looking at her with much alarm, "call back your recollection! you know not what you say, you take no interest in what you answer."

"Indeed I do!" said she, sighing deeply, and oppressed beyond the power of thinking, beyond any power but an internal consciousness of wretchedness.

"Sigh not so bitterly," cried he, "if you have any compassion! sigh not so bitterly,—I cannot bear to hear you!"

"I am very sorry indeed!" said she, sighing again, and not seeming sensible she spoke.

"Good Heaven!" cried he, rising, "distract me not with this horror!—speak not to me in such broken sentences!—Do you hear me, Cecilia?—why will you not answer me?"

She started and trembled, looked pale and affrighted, and putting both her hands upon her heart, said, "Oh yes!—but I have an oppression here,—a tightness, a fulness,—I have not room for breath!"

"Oh beloved of my heart!" cried he, wildly casting himself at her feet, "kill me not with this terror!—call back your faculties,—awake from this dreadful insensibility! tell me at least you know me!—tell me I have not tortured you quite to madness!—sole darling of my affections! my own, my wedded Cecilia!—rescue me from this agony! it is more than I can support!"——

This energy of distress brought back her scattered senses, scarce more stunned by the shock of all this misery, than by the restraint of her feelings in struggling to conceal it. But these passionate exclamations restoring her sensibility, she burst into tears, which happily relieved her mind from the conflict with which it was labouring, and which, not thus effected, might have ended more fatally.

Never had Delvile more rejoiced in her smiles than now in these seasonable tears, which he regarded and blest as the preservers of her reason. They flowed long without any intermission, his soothing and tender-

ness but melting her to more sorrow: after a while, however, the return of her faculties, which at first seemed all consigned over to grief, was manifested by the returning strength of her mind: she blamed herself severely for the little fortitude she had shewn, but having now given vent to emotions too forcible to be wholly stifled, she assured him he might depend upon her better courage for the future, and entreated him to consider and settle his affairs.

Not speedily, however, could Delvile himself recover. The torture he had suffered in believing, though only for a few moments, that the terror he had given to Cecilia had affected her intellects, made even a deeper impression upon his imagination, than the scene of fury and death, which had occasioned that terror: and Cecilia, who now strained every nerve to repair by her firmness, the pain which by her weakness she had given him, was sooner in a condition for reasoning and deliberation than himself.

"Ah Delvile!" she cried, comprehending what passed within him, "do you allow nothing for surprize? and nothing for the hard conflict of endeavouring to suppress it? do you think me still as unfit to advise with, and as worthless, as feeble a counsellor, as during the first confusion of my mind?"

"Hurry not your tender spirits, I beseech you," cried he, "we have time enough; we will talk about business by and by."

"What time?" cried she, "what is it now o'clock?"

"Good Heaven!" cried he, looking at his watch, "already past ten! you must turn me out, my Cecilia, or calumny will still be busy, even though poor Monckton is quiet."

"I *will* turn you out," cried she, "I am indeed most earnest to have you gone. But tell me your plan, and which way you mean to go?"

"That," he answered, "you shall decide for me yourself: whether to Delvile Castle, to finish one tale, and wholly communicate another, or to Margate, to hasten my mother abroad, before the news of this calamity reaches her."

"Go to Margate," cried she, eagerly, "set off this very moment! you can write to your father from Ostend. But continue, I conjure you, on the continent, till we see if this unhappy man lives, and enquire, of those who can judge, what must follow if he should not!"

"A *trial*," *said he*, "*must follow, and it will go*, I fear, but hardly with me! the challenge was mine; his servants can all witness I went to him, not he to me,—Oh my Cecilia! the rashness of which I have been guilty, is so opposite to my principles, and, all generous as is your silence, I know it so opposite to yours, that never, should his blood be on my hands, wretch as he was, never will my heart be quiet more!"

"He will live, he will live!" cried Cecilia, repressing her horror, "fear nothing, for he will live;—and as to his wound and his sufferings, his perfidy has deserved them. Go, then, to Margate; think only of Mrs Delvile, and save her, if possible, from hearing what has happened."

"I will go,—stay,—do which and whatever you bid me: but, should what I fear come to pass, should my mother continue ill, my father inflexible, should this wretched man die, and should England no longer be a country I shall love to dwell in,——could you, then, bear to own,—would you, then, consent to follow me?—"

"Could I?—am I not yours? may you not command me? tell me, then,—you have only to say,—shall I accompany you at once?"

Delvile, affected by her generosity, could scarce utter

his thanks; yet he did not hesitate in denying to avail himself of it; "No, my Cecilia," he cried, "I am not so selfish. If we have not happier days, we will at least wait for more desperate necessity. With the uncertainty if I have not this man's life to answer for at the hazard of my own, to take my wife—my bride,—from the kingdom I must fly!—to make her a fugitive and an exile in the first publishing that she is mine! No, if I am not a destined alien for life I can never permit it. Nothing less, believe me, shall ever urge my consent to wound the chaste propriety of your character, by making you an eloper with a duelist."

They then again consulted upon their future plans; and concluded that in the present disordered state of their affairs, it would be best not to acknowledge even to Mr Delvile their marriage, to whom the news of the duel, and Mr Monckton's danger, would be a blow so severe, that, to add to it any other might half distract him.

To the few people already acquainted with it, Delvile therefore determined to write from Ostend, re-urging his entreaties for their discretion and secrecy. Cecilia promised every post to acquaint him how Mr Monckton went on, and she then besought him to go instantly, that he might out-travel the ill news to his mother.

He complied, and took leave of her in the tenderest manner, conjuring her to support her spirits, and be careful of her health. "Happiness," said he, "is much in arrears with us, and though my violence may have frightened it away, your sweetness and gentleness will yet attract it back: all that for me is in store must be received at your hands,—what is offered in any other way, I shall only mistake for evil! droop not, therefore, my generous Cecilia, but in *yourself preserve me!*"

"I will not droop," said she; "you will find, I hope, you have not intrusted yourself in ill hands."

"Peace then be with you, my love!—my comforting, my soul-reviving Cecilia! Peace, such as angels give, and such as may drive from your mind the remembrance of this bitter hour!"

He then tore himself away.

Cecilia, who to his blessings could almost, like the tender Belvidera, have exclaimed

O do not leave me!—stay with me and curse me!

listened to his steps till she could hear them no longer, as if the remaining moments of her life were to be measured by them: but then, remembering the danger both to herself and him of his stay, she endeavoured to rejoice that he was gone, and, but that her mind was in no state for joy, was too rational not to have succeeded.

Grief and horror for what was past, apprehension and suspense for what was to come, so disordered her whole frame, so confused even her intellects, that when not all the assistance of fancy could persuade her she still heard the footsteps of Delvile, she went to the chair upon which he had been seated, and taking possession of it, sat with her arms crossed, silent, quiet, and erect, almost vacant of all thought, yet with a secret idea she was doing something right.

Here she continued till Henrietta came to wish her good night; whose surprise and concern at the strangeness of her look and attitude, once more recovered her. But terrified herself at this threatened wandering of her reason, and certain she must all night be a stranger to rest, she accepted the affectionate offer of the kind-hearted girl to stay with her, who was too much grieved for her grief to sleep any more than herself.

She told her not what had passed; that, she knew, would be fruitless affliction to her: but she was soothed

by her gentleness, and her conversation was some security from the dangerous rambling of her ideas.

Henrietta herself found no little consolation in her own private sorrows, that she was able to give comfort to her beloved Miss Beverley, from whom she had received favours and kind offices innumerable. She quitted her not night nor day, and in the honest pride of a little power to shew the gratefulness of her heart, she felt a pleasure and self-consequence she had never before experienced.

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Chapter iij.

A SUMMONS.

CECILIA'S earliest care, almost at break of day, was to send to the Grove; from thence she heard nothing but evil; Mr Monckton was still alive, but with little or no hope of recovery, constantly delirious, and talking of Miss Beverley, and of her being married to young Delvile.

Cecilia, who knew well this, at least, was no delirium, though shocked that he talked of it, hoped his danger less than was apprehended.

The next day, however, more fatal news was brought her, though not from the quarter she expected it: Mr Monckton, in one of his raving fits, had sent for Lady Margaret to his bed side, and used her almost inhumanly: he had railed at her age and her infirmities with incredible fury, called her the cause of all his sufferings, and accused her as the immediate agent of Lucifer in his present wound and danger. Lady Margaret, whom neither jealousy nor malignity had cured of loving him, was dismayed and affrighted; and in hurrying out of the room upon his attempting, in his

frenzy, to strike her, she dropt down dead in an apoplectic fit.

"Good Heaven!" thought Cecilia, "what an exemplary punishment has this man! he loses his hated wife, the very moment when her death could no longer answer his purposes! Poor Lady Margaret! her life has been as bitter as her temper! married from a view of interest, ill used as a bar to happiness, and destroyed from the fruitless ravings of despair!"

She wrote all this intelligence to Ostend, whence she received a letter from Delvile, acquainting her he was detained from proceeding further by the weakness and illness of his mother, whose sufferings from sea sickness had almost put an end to her existence.

Thus passed a miserable week; Monckton still merely alive, Delvile detained at Ostend, and Cecilia tortured alike by what was recently passed, actually present, and fearfully expected; when one morning she was told a gentleman upon business desired immediately to speak with her.

She hastily obeyed the summons; the constant image of her own mind, Delvile, being already present to her, and a thousand wild conjectures upon what had brought him back, rapidly occurring to her.

Her expectations, however, were ill answered, for she found an entire stranger; an elderly man, of no pleasant aspect or manners.

She desired to know his business.

"I presume, madam, you are the lady of this house?"

She bowed an assent.

"May I take the liberty, madam, to ask your name?"

"My name, sir?"

"You will do me a favour, madam, by telling it me."

"Is it possible you are come hither without already knowing it?"

"I know it only by common report, madam."

"Common report, sir, I believe is seldom wrong in a matter where to be right is so easy."

"Have you any objection, madam, to telling me your name?"

"No, sir; but your business can hardly be very important, if you are yet to learn whom you are to address. It will be time enough, therefore, for us to meet when you are elsewhere satisfied in this point."

She would then have left the room.

"I beg, madam," cried the stranger, "you will have patience; it is necessary, before I can open my business, that I should hear your name from yourself."

"Well, sir," cried she with some hesitation, "you can scarce have come to this house, without knowing that its owner is Cecilia Beverley."

"That, madam, is your maiden name."

"My maiden name?" cried she, starting.

"Are you not married, madam?"

"Married, sir?" she repeated, while her cheeks were the colour of scarlet.

"It is, properly, therefore, madam, the name of your husband that I mean to ask."

"And by what authority, sir," cried she, equally astonished and offended, "do you make these extraordinary enquiries?"

"I am deputed, madam, to wait upon you by Mr Eggleston, the next heir to this estate, by your uncle's will, if you die without children, or change your name when you marry. His authority of enquiry, madam, I presume you will allow, and he has vested it in me by a letter of attorney."

Cecilia's distress and confusion were now unspeakable; she knew not what to own or deny, she could not conjecture how she had been betrayed, and she had never made the smallest preparation against such an attack.

"Mr Eggleston, madam," he continued, "has been pretty credibly informed that you are actually married: he is very desirous, therefore, to know what are your intentions, for your continuing to be called *Miss* Beverley, as if still single, leaves him quite in the dark: but, as he is so deeply concerned in the affair, he expects, as a lady of honour, you will deal with him without prevarication."

"This demand, sir," said Cecilia, stammering, "is so extremely——so—so little expected——"

"The way, madam, in these cases, is to keep pretty closely to the point; are you married or are you not?"

Cecilia, quite confounded, made no answer: to disavow her marriage, when thus formally called upon, was every way unjustifiable; to acknowledge it in her present situation, would involve her in difficulties innumerable.

"This is not, madam, a slight thing; Mr Eggleston has a large family and a small fortune, and that, into the bargain, very much encumbered; it cannot, therefore, be expected that he will knowingly connive at cheating himself, by submitting to your being actually married, and still enjoying your estate though your husband does not take your name."

Cecilia, now, summoning more presence of mind, answered, "Mr Eggleston, sir, has, at least, nothing to fear from imposition: those with whom he has, or may have any transactions in this affair, are not accustomed to practice it."

"I am far from meaning any offence, madam; my commission from Mr Eggleston is simply this, to beg you will satisfy him upon what grounds you now evade the will of your late uncle, which, till cleared up, appears a point manifestly to his prejudice."

"Tell him, then, sir, that whatever he wishes to

know shall be explained to him in about a week. At present I can give no other answer."

"Very well, madam; he will wait that time, I am sure, for he does not wish to put you to any inconvenience. But when he heard the gentleman was gone abroad without owning his marriage, he thought it high time to take some notice of the matter."

Cecilia, who by this speech found she was every way discovered, was again in the utmost confusion, and with much trepidation, said, "since you seem so well, sir, acquainted with this affair, I should be glad you would inform me by what means you came to the knowledge of it?"

"I heard it, madam, from Mr Eggleston himself, who has long known it."

"Long, sir?—impossible! when it is not yet a fortnight—not ten days, or no more, that——"

She stopt, recollecting she was making a confession better deferred.

"*That, madam,*" *he answered,* "*may perhaps bear a* little contention: for when this business comes to be settled, it will be very essential to be exact as to the time, even to the very hour; for a large income per annum, divides into a small one per diem: and if your husband keeps his own name, you must not only give up your uncle's inheritance from the time of relinquishing yours, but refund from the very day of your marriage."

"There is not the least doubt of it," answered she; "nor will the smallest difficulty be made."

"You will please, then, to recollect, madam, that this sum is every hour encreasing; and has been since last September, which made half a year accountable for last March. Since then there is now added——"

"Good Heaven, Sir," cried Cecilia, "what calculation are you making out? do you call last week last September?"

"No, madam; but I call last September the month in which you were married."

"You will find yourself, then, sir, extremely mistaken; and Mr Eggleston is preparing himself for much disappointment, if he supposes me so long in arrears with him."

"Mr Eggleston, madam, happens to be well informed of this transaction, as, if there is any dispute in it, you will find. He was your immediate successor in the house to which you went last September in Pall-Mall; the woman who kept it acquainted his servants that the last lady who hired it stayed with her but a day, and only came to town, she found, to be married: and hearing, upon enquiry, this lady was Miss Beverley, the servants, well knowing that their master was her conditional heir, told him the circumstance."

"You will find all this, sir, end in nothing."

"That, madam, as I said before, remains to be proved. If a young lady at eight o'clock in the morning, is seen,—and she was seen, going into a church with a young gentleman, and one female friend; and is afterwards observed to come out of it, followed by a clergyman and another person, supposed to have officiated as father, and is seen get into a coach with same young gentleman, and same female friend, why the circumstances are pretty strong!——"

"They may seem so, Sir; but all conclusions drawn from them will be erroneous. I was not married then, upon my honour!"

"We have little, madam, to do with professions; the circumstances are strong enough to bear a trial, and——"

"A trial!——"

"We have traced, madam, many witnesses able to stand to divers particulars; and eight months share of such an estate as this, is well worth a little trouble."

"I am amazed, sir! surely Mr Eggleston never desired you to make use of this language to me?"

"Mr Eggleston, madam, has behaved very honourably; though he knew the whole affair so long ago, he was persuaded Mr Delvile had private reasons for a short concealment; and expecting every day when they would be cleared up by his taking your name, he never interfered: but being now informed he set out last week for the continent, he has been advised by his friends to claim his rights."

"That claim, sir, he need not fear will be satisfied; and without any occasion for threats of enquiries or law suits."

"The truth, madam, is this; Mr Eggleston is at present in a little difficulty about some money matters, which makes it a point with him of some consequence to have the affair settled speedily: unless you could conveniently compromise the matter, by advancing a particular sum, till it suits you to refund the whole that is due to him, and quit the premises."

"*Nothing, sir, is due to him! at least, nothing* worth mentioning. I shall enter into no terms, for I have no compromise to make. As to the premises, I will quit them with all the expedition in my power."

"You will do well, madam; for the truth is, it will not be convenient to him to wait much longer."

He then went away.

"When, next," cried Cecilia, "shall I again be weak, vain, blind enough to form any plan with a hope of secresy? or enter, with *any* hope, into a clandestine scheme! betrayed by those I have trusted, discovered by those I have not thought of, exposed to the cruellest alarms, and defenceless from the most shocking attacks! ——Such has been the life I have led since the moment I first consented to a private engagement!——Ah

Delvile! your mother, in her tenderness, forgot her dignity, or she would not have concurred in an action which to such disgrace made me liable!"

———o———

Chapter ıb.

A DELIBERATION.

IT was necessary, however, not to moralize, but to act; Cecilia had undertaken to give her answer in a week, and the artful attorney had drawn from her an acknowledgment of her situation, by which he might claim it yet sooner.

The law-suit with which she was threatened for the arrears of eight months, alarmed her not, though it shocked her, as she was certain she could prove her marriage so much later.

It was easy to perceive that this man had been sent with a view of working from her a confession, and terrifying from her some money; the confession, indeed, in conscience and honesty she could not wholly elude, but she had suffered too often by a facility in parting with money to be there easily duped.

Nothing, however, was more true, than that she now lived upon an estate of which she no longer was the owner, and that all she either spent or received was to be accounted for and returned, since by the will of her uncle, unless her husband took her name, her estate on the very day of her marriage was to be forfeited, and entered upon by the Egglestons. Delvile's plan and hope of secresy had made them little weigh this matter, though this premature discovery so unexpectedly exposed her to their power.

The first thought that occurred to her, was to send an express to Delvile, and desire his instructions how to

proceed; but she dreaded his impetuosity of temper, and was almost certain that the instant he should hear she was in any uneasiness or perplexity, he would return to her at all hazards, even though Mr Monckton were dead, and his mother herself dying. This step, therefore, she did not dare risk, preferring any personal hardship, to endangering the already precarious life of Mrs Delvile, or to hastening her son home while Mr Monckton was in so desperate a situation.

But though what to avoid was easy to settle, what to seek was difficult to devise. She had now no Mrs Charlton to receive her, not a creature in whom she could confide. To continue her present way of living was deeply involving Delvile in debt, a circumstance she had never considered, in the confusion and hurry attending all their plans and conversations, and a circumstance which, though to him it might have occurred, he could not in common delicacy mention.

Yet to have quitted her house, and retrenched her expences, would have raised suspicions that must have anticipated the discovery she so much wished to have delayed. That wish, by the present danger of its failure, was but more ardent; to have her affairs and situation become publicly known at the present period, she felt would half distract her.——Privately married, parted from her husband at the very moment of their union, a husband by whose hand the apparent friend of her earliest youth was all but killed, whose father had execrated the match, whose mother was now falling a sacrifice to the vehemence with which she had opposed it, and who himself, little short of an exile, knew not yet if, with personal safety, he might return to his native land!

To circumstances so dreadful, she had now the additional shock of being uncertain whether her own house might not be seized, before any other could be prepared for her reception!

Yet still whither to go, what to do, or what to resolve, she was wholly unable to determine; and after meditating almost to madness in the search of some plan or expedient, she was obliged to give over the attempt, and be satisfied with remaining quietly where she was, till she had better news from Delvile of his mother, or better news to send him of Mr Monckton; carefully, mean time, in all her letters avoiding to alarm him by any hint of her distress.

Yet was she not idle, either from despair or helplessness: she found her difficulties encreased, and she called forth more resolution to combat them: she animated herself by the promise she had made Delvile, and recovering from the sadness to which she had at first given way, she now exerted herself with vigour to perform it as she ought.

She began by making an immediate inspection into her affairs, and endeavouring, where expence seemed unnecessary, to lessen it. She gave Henrietta to understand she feared they must soon part; and so afflicted was the unhappy girl at the news, that she found it the most cruel office she had to execute. The same intimation she gave to Mrs Harrel, who repined at it more openly, but with a selfishness so evident that it blunted the edge of pity. She then announced to Albany her inability to pursue, at present, their extensive schemes of benevolence; and though he instantly left her, to carry on his laborious plan elsewhere, the reverence she had now excited in him of her character, made him leave her with no sensation but of regret, and readily promise to return when her affairs were settled, or her mind more composed.

These little preparations, which were all she could make, with enquiries after Mr Monckton, and writing to Delvile, sufficiently filled up her time, though her thoughts were by no means confined to them. Day

after day passed, and Mr Monckton continued to linger rather than live; the letters of Delvile, still only dated from Ostend, contained the most melancholy complaints of the illness of his mother; and the time advanced when her answer would be claimed by the attorney.

The thought of such another visit was almost intolerable; and within two days of the time that she expected it, she resolved to endeavour herself to prevail with Mr Eggleston to wait longer.

Mr Eggleston was a gentleman whom she knew little more than by sight; he was no relation to her family, nor had any connection with the Dean, but by being a cousin to a lady he had married, and who had left him no children. The dean had no particular regard for him, and had rather mentioned him in his will as the successor of Cecilia, in case she died unmarried or changed her name, as a mark that he approved of her doing neither, than as a matter he thought probable, if even possible, to turn out in his favour.

He was a man of a large family, the sons of which, who were extravagant and dissipated, had much impaired his fortune by prevailing with him to pay their debts, and much distressed him in his affairs by successfully teasing him for money.

Cecilia, acquainted with these circumstances, knew but too well with what avidity her estate would be seized by them, and how little the sons would endure delay, even if the father consented to it. Yet since the *sacrifice to which she had agreed must soon make it* indisputably their own, she determined to deal with them openly; and acknowledged, therefore, in her letter, her marriage without disguise, but begged their patience and secresy, and promised, in a short time, the most honourable retribution and satisfaction.

She sent this letter by a man and horse, Mr Eggleston's habitation being within fifteen miles of her own.

The answer was from his eldest son, who acquainted her that his father was very ill, and had put all his affairs into the hands of Mr Carn, his attorney, who was a man of great credit, and would see justice done on all sides.

If this answer, which she broke open the instant she took it into her hand, was in itself a cruel disappointment to her, how was that disappointment embittered by shame and terror, when, upon again folding it up, she saw it was directed to Mrs Mortimer Delvile!

This was a decisive stroke; what they wrote to her, she was sure they would mention to all others; she saw they were too impatient for her estate to be moved by any representations to a delay, and that their eagerness to publish their right, took from them all consideration of what they might make her suffer. Mr Eggleston, she found, permitted himself to be wholly governed by his son; his son was a needy and profligate spendthrift, and by throwing the management of the affair into the hands of an attorney, craftily meant to shield himself from the future resentment of Delvile, to whom, hereafter, he might affect, at his convenience, to disapprove Mr Carn's behaviour, while Mr Carn was always secure, by averring he only exerted himself for the interest of his client.

The discerning Cecilia, though but little experienced in business, and wholly unsuspicious by nature, yet saw into this management, and doubted not these excuses were already arranged. She had only, therefore, to save herself an actual ejectment, by quitting a house in which she was exposed to such a disgrace.

But still whither to go she knew not! One only attempt seemed in her power for an honourable asylum, and that was more irksomely painful to her than seeking shelter in the meanest retreat: it was applying to Mr Delvile senior.

The action of leaving her house, whether quietly or forcibly, could not but instantly authenticate the reports spread by the Egglestons of her marriage: to hope therefore for secresy any longer would be folly, and Mr Delvile's rage at such intelligence might be still greater to hear it by chance than from herself. She now lamented that Delvile had not at once told the tale, but, little foreseeing such a discovery as the present, they had mutually concluded to defer the communication till his return.

Her own anger at the contemptuous ill treatment she had repeatedly met from him, she was now content not merely to suppress but to dismiss, since, as the wife of his son without his consent, she considered herself no longer as wholly innocent of incurring it. Yet, such was her dread of his austerity and the arrogance of his reproaches, that, by choice, she would have preferred an habitation with her own pensioner, the pew-opener, to the grandest apartment in Delvile Castle while he continued its lord.

In her present situation, however, her choice was little to be consulted: the honour of Delvile was concerned in her escaping even temporary disgrace, and nothing, she knew, would so much gratify him, as any attention from her to his father. She wrote to him, therefore, the following letter, which she sent by an express.

To the Hon. Compton Delvile.

April 29th, 1780.

Sir,—I should not, even by letter, presume thus to force myself upon your remembrance, did I not think it a duty I now owe your son, both to risk and to bear the displeasure it may unhappily occasion. After such an acknowledgment, all other confession would be super-

fluous; and uncertain as I am if you will ever deign to own me, more words than are necessary would be merely impertinent.

It was the intention of your son, Sir, when he left the kingdom, to submit wholly to your arbitration, at his return, which should be resigned, his own name or my fortune: but his request for your decision, and his supplication for your forgiveness, are both, most unfortunately, prevented, by a premature and unforeseen discovery of our situation, which renders an immediate determination absolutely unavoidable.

At this distance from him, I cannot, in time, receive his directions upon the measures I have to take; pardon me then, Sir, if well knowing my reference to him will not be more implicit than his own to you, I venture, in the present important crisis of my affairs, to entreat those commands instantly, by which I am certain of being guided ultimately.

I would commend myself to your favour but that I dread exciting your resentment. I will detain you, therefore, only to add, that the father of Mr Mortimer Delvile, will ever meet the most profound respect from her who, without his permission, dare sign no name to the honour she now has in declaring herself his most humble, and most obedient servant.

Her mind was somewhat easier when this letter was written, because she thought it a duty, yet felt reluctance in performing it. She wished to have represented to him strongly the danger of Delvile's hearing her distress, but she knew so well his inordinate self-sufficiency, she feared a hint of that sort might be construed into an insult, and concluded her only chance that he would do any thing, was by leaving wholly to his own suggestions the weighing and settling what.

But though nothing was more uncertain than whether

she should be received at Delvile Castle, nothing was more fixed than that she must quit her own house, since the pride of Mr Delvile left not even a chance that his interest would conquer it. She deferred not, therefore, any longer making preparations for her removal, though *wholly unsettled whither.*

Her first, which was also her most painful task, was to acquaint Henrietta with her situation: she sent, therefore, to desire to speak with her, but the countenance of Henrietta shewed her communication would not surprise her.

"What is the matter with my dear Henrietta?" cried Cecilia; "who is it has already afflicted that kind heart which I am now compelled to afflict for *myself?*"

Henrietta, in whom anger appeared to be struggling with sorrow, answered, "No, madam, not afflicted for *you!* it would be strange if I were, thinking as I think!"

"I am glad," said Cecilia, calmly, "if you are not, for I would give to you, were it possible, nothing but pleasure and joy."

"Ah madam!" cried Henrietta, bursting into tears, "*why will you say so when you don't care what becomes of me! when you are going to cast me off!*—and when you will soon be too happy ever to think of me more!"

"If I am never happy till then," said Cecilia, "sad, indeed, will be my life! no, my gentlest friend, you will always have your share in my heart; and always, to me, would have been the welcomest guest in my house, but for those unhappy circumstances which make our separating inevitable."

"Yet you suffered me, madam, to hear from any body that *you was married and going away; and all* the common servants in the house knew it before me."

"I am amazed!" said Cecilia; "how and which way can they have heard it?"

"The man that went to Mr Eggleston brought the first news of it, for he said all the servants there talked of nothing else, and that their master was to come and take possession here next Thursday."

Cecilia started at this most unwelcome intelligence; "Yet you envy me," she cried, "Henrietta, though I am forced from my house! though in quitting it, I am unprovided with any other, and though him for whom I relinquish it, is far off, without means of protecting, or power of returning to me!"

"But you are married to him, madam!" cried she, expressively.

"True, my love; but, also, I am parted from him!"

"Oh how differently," exclaimed Henrietta, "do the great think from the little! were *I* married,—and *so* married, I should want neither house, nor fine cloaths, nor riches, nor any thing;—I should not care where I lived,—every place would be paradise! I would walk to him barefoot if he were a thousand miles off, and I should mind nobody else in the world while I had him to take care of me!"

Ah Delvile! thought Cecilia, what powers of fascination are yours! should I be tempted to repine at what I have to bear, I will think of this heroick girl, and blush!

Mrs Harrel now broke in upon them, eager to be informed of the truth or falsehood of the reports which were buzzed throughout the house. Cecilia briefly related to them both the state of her affairs, earnestly expressing her concern at the abrupt separation which must take place, and for which she had been unable to prepare them, as the circumstances which led to it had been wholly unforeseen by herself.

Mrs Harrel listened to the account with much curiosity and surprize; but Henrietta wept incessantly in hearing it: the object of a passion ardent as it was romantic, lost to her past recovery; torn herself, probably for ever, from the best friend she had in the world; and obliged to return thus suddenly to an home she detested,—Henrietta possessed not the fortitude to hear evils such as these, which, to her inexperienced heart, appeared the severest that could be inflicted.

This conversation over, Cecilia sent for her Steward, and desired him, with the utmost expedition, to call in all her bills, and instantly to go round to her tenants within twenty miles, and gather in, from those who were able to pay, the arrears now due to her; charging him, however, upon no account, to be urgent with such as seemed distressed.

The bills she had to pay were collected without difficulty; she never owed much, and creditors are seldom hard of access; but the money she hoped to receive fell very short of her expectations, for the indulgence she had shewn to her tenants had ill prepared them for so sudden a demand.

Chapter 9.

A DECISION.

THIS business effectually occupied the present and following day; the third, Cecilia expected her answer from Delvile Castle, and the visit she so much dreaded from the attorney.

The answer arrived first.

To Miss Beverley.

MADAM,—As my son has never apprized me of the extraordinary step which your letter intimates, I

am too unwilling to believe him capable of so far forgetting what he owes his family, to ratify any such intimation by interfering with my counsel or opinion.—
I am, Madam, &c., COMPTON DELVILE.

DELVILE CASTLE,
May 1st, 1780.

Cecilia had little right to be surprised by this letter, and she had not a moment to comment upon it, before the attorney arrived.

"Well, madam," said the man, as he entered the parlour, "Mr Eggleston has stayed your own time very patiently: he commissions me now to enquire if it is convenient to you to quit the premises."

"No, Sir, it is by no means convenient to me; and if Mr Eggleston will wait some time longer, I shall be greatly obliged to him."

"*No doubt, madam, but he will, upon proper considerations.*"

"What, Sir, do you call proper?"

"Upon your advancing to him, as I hinted before, an immediate particular sum from what must, by and bye, be legally restituted."

"If this is the condition of his courtesy, I will quit the house without giving him further trouble."

"Just as it suits you, madam. He will be glad to take possession to-morrow or next day."

"You did well, Sir, to commend his patience! I *shall, however, merely discharge my servants, and* settle my accounts, and be ready to make way for him."

"You will not take it amiss, madam, if I remind you that the account with Mr Eggleston must be the first that is settled."

"If you mean the arrears of this last fortnight or three weeks, I believe I must desire him to wait Mr

Delvile's return, as I may otherwise myself be distressed for ready money."

"*That, madam, is not likely, as it is* well known you have a fortune that was independent of your late uncle; and as to distress for ready money, it is a plea Mr Eggleston can urge much more strongly."

"This is being strangely hasty, Sir!—so short a time as it is since Mr Eggleston could expect *any* of this estate!"

"That, madam, is nothing to the purpose; *from the* moment it is his, he has as many wants for it as any other gentleman. He desired me, however, to acquaint you, that if you still chose an apartment in this house, till Mr Delvile returns, you shall have one at your service."

"To be a *guest* in this house, Sir," said Cecilia, drily, "might perhaps seem strange to me; I will not, therefore, be so much in his way."

Mr Cran then informed her she might put her seal upon *whatever she meant hereafter to claim or dispute*, and took his leave.

Cecilia now shut herself up in her own room, to meditate without interruption, before she would proceed to any action. She felt much inclination to send instantly for some lawyer; but when she considered her peculiar situation, the absence of her husband, the renunciation of his father, the loss of her fortune, and her ignorance upon the subject, she thought it better to rest quiet till Delvile's own fate, and own opinion could be *known, than to involve herself in a lawsuit she was* so little able to superintend.

In this cruel perplexity of her mind and her affairs, her first thought was to board again with Mrs Bayley; but that was soon given up, for she felt a repugnance unconquerable to continuing in her native county, when deprived of her fortune, and cast out of her dwelling.

Her situation, indeed, was singularly unhappy, since, by this unforeseen vicissitude of fortune, she was suddenly, from being an object of envy and admiration, sunk into distress, and threatened with disgrace; from being every *where caressed, and by every voice praised, she blushed* to be seen, and expected to be censured; and, from being generally regarded as an example of happiness, and a model of virtue, she was now in one moment to appear to the world, an outcast from her own house, yet received into no other! a bride, unclaimed by a husband! an HEIRESS, dispossessed of all wealth!

To be first acknowledged as *Mrs Delvile* in a state so degrading, she could not endure; and to escape from it, one way alone remained, which was going instantly abroad.

Upon this, therefore, she finally determined: her former objections to such a step being now wholly, though unpleasantly removed, since she had neither estate nor affairs to demand her stay, and since all hopes of concealment were totally at an end. Her marriage, therefore, and its disgraceful consequences being published to the world, she resolved without delay to seek the only asylum which was proper for her, in the protection of the husband for whom she had given up every other.

She purposed, therefore, to go immediately and privately to London, whence she could best settle her route for the continent: where she hoped to arrive before the news of her distress reached Delvile, whom nothing, she was certain, but her own presence, could keep there for a moment after hearing it.

Thus decided, at length, in her plan, she proceeded to put it in execution with calmness and intrepidity; comforting herself that the conveniencies and indulgencies with which she was now parting, would soon be restored to her, and though not with equal power, with far more

satisfaction. She told her steward her design of going the next morning to London, bid him pay instantly all her debts, and discharge all her servants, determining to keep no account open but that with Mr Eggleston, which he had made so intricate by double and undue demands, that she thought it most prudent and safe to leave him wholly to Delvile.

She then packed up all her papers and letters, and ordered her maid to pack up her clothes.

She next put her own seal upon her cabinets, draws, and many other things, and employed almost all her servants at once, in making complete inventories of what every room contained.

She advised Mrs Harrel to send without delay for Mr Arnott, and return to his house. She had first purposed to carry Henrietta home to her mother herself; but another scheme for her now occurred, from which she hoped much future advantage to the amiable and dejected girl.

She knew well, that deep as was at present her despondency, the removal of all possibility of hope, by her knowledge of Delvile's marriage, must awaken her before long from the delusive visions of her romantic fancy; Mr Arnott himself was in a situation exactly similar, and the knowledge of the same event would probably be productive of the same effect. When Mrs Harrel, therefore, began to repine at the solitude to which she was returning, Cecilia proposed to her the society of Henrietta, which, glad to catch at any thing that would break into her loneliness, she listened to with pleasure, and seconded by an invitation.

Henrietta, to whom all houses appeared preferable to her own home, joyfully accepted the offer, committing to Cecilia the communication of the change of her abode to Mrs Belfield.

Cecilia, who in the known and tried honour of Mr

Arnott would unreluctantly have trusted a sister, was much pleased by this little arrangement, from which should no good ensue, no evil, at least, was probable. But she hoped, through the mutual pity their mutual melancholy might inspire, that their minds, already not dissimilar, would be softened in favour of each other, and that, in conclusion, each might be happy in receiving the consolation each could give, and a union would take place, in which their reciprocal disappointment might, in time, be nearly forgotten.

There was not, indeed, much promise of such an event in the countenance of Mr Arnott, when, late at night, he came for his sister, nor in the unbounded *sorrow of Henrietta, when the moment of leave-taking* arrived. Mr Arnott looked half dead with the shock his sister's intelligence had given him, and Henrietta's heart, torn asunder between friendship and love, was scarce able to bear a parting, which from Cecilia, she regarded as eternal, added to the consciousness it was occasioned by her going to join Delvile for life!

Cecilia, who both read and pitied these conflicting emotions, was herself extremely hurt by this necessary separation. She tenderly loved Henrietta, she loved her even the more for the sympathy of their affections, which called forth the most forcible commiseration,—that which springs from fellow-feeling!

"Farewell," she cried, "my Henrietta, be but happy as you are innocent, and be both as I love you, and nothing will your friends have to wish for you, or yourself to regret."

"I must always regret," cried the sobbing Henrietta, "that I cannot live with you for ever! I should regret it if I were queen of all the world, how much more then, when I am nothing and nobody! I do not wish *you* happy, madam, for I think happiness was made on purpose for you, and nobody else ever had it before; I

only wish you health and long life, for the sake of those who will be made as happy as you,—for you will spoil them,—as you have spoilt me,—from being ever happy without you!"

Cecilia re-iterated her assurances of a most faithful regard, embraced Mrs Harrel, spoke words of kindness to the drooping Mr Arnott, and then parted with them all.

Having still many small matters to settle, and neither company nor appetite, she would eat no supper; but, in passing thro' the hall, in her way to her own room, she was much surprised to see all her domestics assembled in a body. She stopt to enquire their intention, when they eagerly pressed forward, humbly and earnestly entreating to know why they were discharged?

"For no reason in the world," cried Cecilia, "but because it is at present out of my power to keep you any longer."

"Don't part with *me*, madam, for that," cried one of them, "for I will serve you for nothing!"

"So will I!" cried another, "And I!" "And I!" was echoed by them all; while "no other such mistress is to be found!" "We can never bear any other place!" and "keep *me*, madam, at least!" was even clamorously urged by each of them.

Cecilia, distressed and flattered at once by their unwillingness to quit her, received this testimony of gratitude for the kind and liberal treatment they had received, with the warmest thanks both for their services and fidelity, and assured them that when again she was settled, all those who should be yet unprovided with places, should be preferred in her house before any other claimants.

Having, with difficulty, broken from them, she sent for her own man, Ralph, who had lived with her many years before the death of the Dean, and told him she

meant still to continue him in her service. The man heard it with great delight, and promised to re-double his diligence to deserve her favour. She then communicated the same news to her maid, who had also resided with her some years, and by whom with the same, or more pleasure it was heard.

These and other regulations employed her almost all night; yet late and fatigued as she went to bed, she could not close her eyes: fearful something was left undone, she robbed herself of the short time she had allowed to rest, by incessant meditation upon what yet remained to be executed. She could recollect, however, one only thing that had escaped her vigilance, which was acquainting the pew-opener, and two or three other poor women who had weekly pensions from her, that they must, at least for the present, depend no longer upon her assistance.

Nothing indeed could be more painful to her than giving them such information, yet not to be speedy with it would double the barbarity of their disappointment. She even felt for these poor women, whose loss in her she knew would be irreparable, a compassion that drove from her mind almost every other subject, and determined her, in order to soften to them this misfortune, to communicate it herself, that she might prevent them from sinking under it, by reviving them with hopes of her future assistance.

She had ordered at seven o'clock in the morning an hired chaise at the door, and she did not suffer it long to wait for her. She quitted her house with a heart full of care and anxiety, grieving at the necessity of making such a sacrifice, uncertain how it would turn out, and labouring under a thousand perplexities with respect to the measures she ought immediately to take. She passed, when she reached the hall, through a row of weeping domestics, not one of whom with dry eyes

could see the house bereft of such a mistress. She spoke to them all with kindness, and as much as was in her power with cheerfulness: but the tone of her voice gave them little reason to think the concern at this journey was all their own.

She ordered her chaise to drive round to the pew-opener's, and thence to the rest of her immediate dependents. She soon, however, regretted that she had given herself this task; the affliction of these poor pensioners was clamorous, was almost heart-breaking; they could live, they said, no longer, they were ruined for ever; they should soon be without bread to eat, and they might cry for help in vain, when their generous, their only benefactress was far away!

Cecilia made the kindest efforts to comfort and encourage them, assuring them the very moment her own affairs were arranged, she would remember them all, visit them herself, and contribute to their relief, with all the power she should have left. Nothing, however, could console them; they clung about her, almost took the horses from the chaise, and conjured her not to desert those who were solely cherished by her bounty!

Nor was this all she had to suffer; the news of her intention to quit the county was now reported throughout the neighbourhood, and had spread the utmost consternation among the poor in general, and the lower class of her own tenants in particular, and the road was soon lined with women and children, wringing their hands and crying. They followed her carriage with supplications that she would return to them, mixing blessings with their lamentations, and prayers for her happiness with the bitterest repinings at their own loss!

Cecilia was extremely affected; her liberal and ever-ready hand was every other instant involuntarily seeking her purse, which her many immediate expences, made

her prudence as often check : and now first she felt the capital error she had committed, in living constantly to the utmost extent of her income, without ever preparing, though so able to have done it, against any unfortunate contingency.

When she escaped, at last, from receiving any longer this painful tribute to her benevolence, she gave orders to her man to ride forward and stop at the Grove, that a precise and minute account of Mr Monckton, might be the last, as it was now become the most important, news she should hear in Suffolk. This he did, when to her equal surprise and delight, she heard that he was suddenly so much better, there were hopes of his recovery.

Intelligence so joyful made her amends for almost every thing; yet she hesitated not in her plan of going abroad, as she knew not where to be in England, and could not endure to hurry Delvile from his sick mother, by acquainting him with her helpless and distressed situation. But so revived were her spirits by these unexpected tidings, that a gleam of brightest hope once more danced before her eyes, and she felt herself invigorated with fresh courage and new strength, sufficient to support her through all hardships and fatigues.

Spirits and courage were indeed much wanted for the enterprize she had formed; but little used to travelling, and having never been out of England, she knew nothing of the route but by a general knowledge of geography, which, though it could guide her east or west, could teach her nothing of foreign customs, the preparations necessary for the journey, the impositions she should guard against, nor the various dangers to which she might be exposed, from total ignorance of the country through which she had to pass.

Conscious of these deficiencies for such an under-

taking, she deliberated without intermission how to obviate them. Yet sometimes, when to these hazards, those arising from her youth and sex were added, she was upon the point of relinquishing her scheme, as too perilous for execution, and resolving to continue privately in London till some change happened in her affairs.

But though to every thing she could suggest, doubts and difficulties arose, she had no friend to consult, nor could devise any means by which they might be terminated. Her maid was her only companion, and Ralph, who had spent almost his whole life in Suffolk, her only guard and attendant. To hire immediately some French servant, used to travelling in his own country, seemed the first step she had to take, and so essential, that no other appeared feasible till it was done. But where to hear of such a man she could not tell, and to take one not well recommended, would be exposing herself to frauds and dangers innumerable.

Yet so slow as Delvile travelled, from whom her last letter was still dated Ostend, she thought herself almost certain, could she once reach the continent, of overtaking him in his route within a day or two of her landing.

The earnest inclination with which this scheme was seconded, made her every moment less willing to forego it. It seemed the only harbour for her after the storm she had weathered, and the only refuge she could properly seek while thus houseless and helpless. Even were Delvile in England, he had no place at present to offer her, nor could any thing be proposed so unexceptionable as her living with Mrs Delvile at Nice, till he knew his father's pleasure, and, in a separate journey home, had arranged his affairs either for her return, or her continuance abroad.

With what regret did she now look back to the time

when, in a distress such as this, she should have applied for, and received the advice of Mr Monckton as oracular! The loss of a counsellor so long, so implicitly relied upon, lost to her also, only by his own interested worthlessness, she felt almost daily, for almost daily some intricacy or embarrassment made her miss *his assistance: and though glad, since she found him so* undeserving, that she had escaped the snares he had spread for her, she grieved much that she knew no man of honest character and equal abilities, that would care for her sufficiently to supply his place in her confidence.

As she was situated at present, she could think only of Mr Belfield to whom she could apply for any advice. Nor even to him was the application unexceptionable, the calumnies of Mr Delvile senior making it disagreeable to her even to see him. But he was at once a man *of the world and a man of honour; he was the friend* of Mortimer, whose confidence in him was great, and *his own behaviour had uniformly shewn a respect far* removed from impertinence or vanity, and a mind superior to being led to them by the influence of his gross mother. She had, indeed, when she last quitted his house, determined never to re-enter it; but determinations hasty or violent, are rarely observed, because rarely practicable; she had promised Henrietta to inform Mrs Belfield whither she was gone, and reconcile her to the absence she still hoped to make from home. She concluded, therefore, to go to Portland-street without delay, and enquire openly and at once *whether, and when, she might speak with Mr Belfield;* resolving, if tormented again by any forward insinuations, to rectify all mistakes by acknowledging her marriage.

She gave directions accordingly to the post-boy and Ralph.

With respect to her own lodgings while in town, as money was no longer unimportant to her, she meant from the Belfields to go to the Hills, by whom she might be recommended to some reputable and cheap place. To the Belfields, however, though very late when she arrived in town, she went first, unwilling to lose a moment in promoting her scheme of going abroad.

She left her maid in the chaise, and sent Ralph on to Mrs Hill, with directions to endeavour immediately to procure her a lodging.

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Chapter 6j.

A PRATING.

CECILIA was shewn into a parlour, where Mrs Belfield was very earnestly discoursing with Mr Hobson and Mr Simkins; and Belfield himself, to her great satisfaction, was already there, and reading.

"Lack a-day!" cried Mrs Belfield, "if one does not always see the people one's talking of! Why it was but this morning, madam, I was saying to Mr Hobson, I wonder, says I, a young lady of such fortunes as Miss Beverley should mope herself up so in the country! Don't you remember it, Mr Hobson?"

"Yes, madam," answered Mr Hobson, "but I think, for my part, the young lady's quite in the right to do as she's a mind; for that's what I call living agreeable: and if I was a young lady to-morrow, with such fine fortunes, and that, it's just what I should do myself: for what I say is this: where's the joy of having a little money, and being a little matter above the world, if one has not one's own will?"

"Ma'am," said Mr Simkins, who had scarce yet raised his head from the profoundness of his bow upon Cecilia's entrance into the room, "if I may be so free, may I make bold just for to offer you this chair?"

"I called, madam," said Cecilia, seizing the first moment in her power to speak, "in order to acquaint you that your daughter, who is perfectly well, has made a little change in her situation, which she was anxious you should hear from myself."

"Ha! ha! stolen a match upon you, I warrant!" cried the facetious Mr Hobson; "a good example for you, young lady; and if you take my advice, you won't be long before you follow it; for as to a lady, let her be worth never so much, she's a mere nobody, as one may say, till she can get herself a husband, being she knows nothing of business, and is made to pay for every thing through the nose."

"Fie, Mr Hobson, fie!" said Mr Simkins, "to talk so slighting of the ladies before their faces! what one says in a corner, is quite of another nature; but for to talk so rude in their company,—I thought you would scorn to do such a thing."

"Sir, I don't want to be rude no more than yourself," said Mr Hobson, "for what I say is, rudeness is a thing that makes nobody agreeable; but I don't see because of that, why a man is not to speak his mind to a lady as well as to a gentleman, provided he does it in a complaisant fashion."

"Mr Hobson," cried Mrs Belfield, very impatiently, "you might as well let *me* speak, when the matter is all about my own daughter."

"I ask pardon, ma'am," said he, "I did not mean to stop you; for as to not letting a lady speak, one might as well tell a man in business not to look at the Daily Advertiser; why, it's morally impossible!"

"But sure, madam," cried Mrs Belfield, "it's no such thing? You can't have got her off already?"

"I would I had!" thought Cecilia; who then explained her meaning; but in talking of Mrs Harel, avoided all mention of Mr Arnott, well foreseeing that to hear such a man existed, and was in the same house with her daughter, would be sufficient authority to her sanguine expectations, for depending upon a union between them, and reporting it among her friends.

This circumstance being made clear, Cecilia added, "I could by no means have consented voluntarily to parting so soon with Miss Belfield, but that my own affairs call me at present out of the kingdom." And then, addressing herself to Belfield, she enquired if he could recommend to her a trusty foreign servant, who would be hired only for the time she was to spend abroad?

While Belfield was endeavouring to recollect some such person, Mr Hobson eagerly called out "As to going abroad, madam, to be sure you're to do as you like, for that, as I say, is the soul of every thing; but else I can't say it's a thing I much approve; for my notion is this: here's a fine fortune, got as a man may say, out of the bowels of one's mother country, and this fine fortune, in default of male issue, is obliged to come to a female, the law making no proviso to the contrary. Well, this female, going into a strange country, naturally takes with her this fortune, by reason it's the main article she has to depend upon; what's the upshot? why she gets pilfered by a set of sharpers that never saw England in their lives, and that never lose sight of her till she has not a sous in the world. But the hardship of the thing is this: when it's all gone, the lady can come back, but will the money come back? —No, you'll never see it again: now this is what I call being no true patriot."

"I am quite ashamed for to hear you talk so, Mr Hobson!" cried Mr Simkins, affecting to whisper; "to go for to take a person to task at this rate, is behaving quite unbearable; it's enough to make the young lady afraid to speak before you."

"Why, Mr Simkins," answered Mr Hobson, "truth is truth, whether one speaks it or not; and that, ma'am, I dare say, a young lady of your good sense knows as well as myself."

"I think, madam," said Belfield, who waited their silence with great impatience, "that I know just such a man as you will require, and one upon whose honesty I believe you may rely."

"That's more," said Mr Hobson, "than I would take upon me to say for any *Englishman!* where you may meet with such a *Frenchman*, I won't be bold to say."

"Why indeed," said Mr Simkins, "if I might take the liberty for to put in, though I don't mean in no shape to go to contradicting the young gentleman, but if I was to make bold to speak my private opinion upon the head, I should be inclinable for to say, that as to putting a dependance upon the French, it's a thing quite dubious how it may turn out."

"I take it as a great favour, ma'am," said Mrs Belfield, "that you have been so complaisant as to make me this visit to-night, for I was almost afraid you would not have done me the favour any more; for, to be sure, when you was here last, things went a little unlucky: but I had no notion, for my part, who the old gentleman was till after he was gone, when Mr Hobson told me it was old Mr Delvile: though, sure enough, I thought it rather upon the extraordinary order, that he should come here into my parlour, and make such a secret of his name, on purpose to ask me questions about my own son."

"Why I think, indeed, if I may be so free," said Mr Simkins, "it was rather petickeler of the gentleman; for, to be sure, if he was so over curious to hear about your private concerns, the genteel thing, if I may take the liberty for to differ, would have been for him to say, ma'am, says he, I'm come to ask the favour of you just to let me a little into your son's goings on; and any thing, ma'am, you should take a fancy for to ask me upon the return, why I shall be very compliable, ma'am, says he, to giving of you satisfaction."

"I dare say," answered Mrs Belfield, "he would not have said so much if you'd have gone down on your knees to ask him. Why he was upon the very point of being quite in a passion because I only asked him his name! though what harm that could do him, I'm sure I never could guess. However, as he was so mighty inquisitive about my son, if I had but known who he was in time, I should have made no scruple in the world to ask him if he could not have spoke a few words for him to some of those great people that could have done him some good. But the thing that I believe put him so out of humour, was my being so unlucky as to say, before ever I knew who he was, that I had heard he was not over and above good-natured; for I saw he did not seem much to like it at the time."

"If he had done the generous thing," said Mr Simkins, "it would have been for him to have made the proffer of his services of his own free-will; and it's rather surpriseable to me he should never have thought of it; for what could be so natural as for him to say, I see, ma'am, says he, you've got a very likely young gentleman here, that's a little out of cash, says he, so I suppose, ma'am, says he, a place, or a pension, or something in that shape of life, would be no bad compliment, says he."

"But no such good luck as that will come to my

share," cried Mrs Belfield, "I can tell you that, for every thing I want to do goes quite contrary. Who would not have thought such a son as mine, though I say it before his face, could not have made his fortune long ago, living as he did, among all the great folks, and dining at their table just like one of themselves? yet, for all that, you see they let him go on his own way, and think of him no more than of nobody! I'm sure they might be ashamed to shew their faces, and so I should tell them at once, if I could but get sight of them."

"I don't mean, ma'am," said Mr Simkins, "for to be finding fault with what you say, for I would not be unpelite in no shape; but if I might be so free as for to differ a little bit, I must needs say I am rather for going to work in anotherguess sort of a manner; and if I was as you—"

"Mr Simkins," interrupted Belfield, "we will settle this matter another time." And then, turning to the wearied Cecilia, "The man, madam," he said, "whom I have done myself the honour to recommend to you, I can see to-morrow morning; may I then tell him to wait upon you?"

"I ask pardon for just putting in," cried Mr Simkins, before Cecilia could answer, and again bowing down to the ground, "but I only mean to say I had no thought for to be impertinent, for as to what I was agoing to remark, is was not of no consequence in the least."

"Its a great piece of luck, ma'am," said Mrs Belfield, "that you should happen to come here, of a holiday! If my son had not been at home, I should have been ready to cry for a week: and you might come any day the year through but a Sunday, and not meet with him any more than if he had never a home to come to."

"If Mr Belfield's home-visits are so periodical,"

said Cecilia, "it must be rather less, than more, difficult to meet with him."

"Why you know, ma'am," answered Mrs Belfield, "to-day is a red-letter day, so that's the reason of it."

"A red-letter day?"

"Good lack, madam, why have not you heard that my son is turned book-keeper?"

Cecilia, much surprised, looked at Belfield, who, colouring very high, and apparently much provoked by *his mother's loquacity, said,* "*Had Miss Beverley not* heard it even now, madam, I should probably have lost with her no credit."

"You can surely lose none, Sir," answered Cecilia, "by an employment too little pleasant to have been undertaken from any but the most laudable motives."

"It is not, madam, the employment," said he, "for which I so much blush as for the person employed—for *myself!* In the beginning of the winter you left me just engaged in another business, a business with which I was madly delighted, and fully persuaded I should be enchanted for ever;—now, again, in the beginning of the summer,—you find me, already, in a new occupation!"

"I am sorry," said Cecilia, "but far indeed from surprised, that you found yourself deceived by such sanguine expectations."

"*Deceived!*" *cried he, with energy,* "*I was* bewitched, I was infatuated! common sense was estranged by the seduction of a chimera; my understanding was in a ferment from the ebullition of my imagination! But when this new way of life lost its novelty,—novelty! that short-liv'd, but exquisite bliss! no sooner caught than it vanishes, no sooner tasted than it is gone! which charms but to fly, and comes but to destroy what it leaves behind!—when that was lost, reason, cool, heartless reason, took its place, and teach-

ing me to wonder at the frenzy of my folly, brought me back to the tameness—the sadness of reality!"

"I am sure," cried Mrs Belfield, "whatever it has brought you back to, it has brought you back to no good! it's a hard case, you must needs think, madam, to a mother, to see a son that might do whatever he would, if he'd only set about it, contenting himself with doing nothing but scribble and scribe one day, and when he gets tired of that, thinking of nothing better than casting up two and two!"

"Why, madam," said Mr Hobson, "what I have seen of the world is this; there's nothing methodizes a man but business. If he's never so much upon the stilts, that's always a sure way to bring him down, by reason he soon finds there's nothing to be got by rhodomontading. Let every man be his own carver; but what I say is, them gentlemen that are what one may call geniuses, commonly think nothing of the main chance, till they get a tap on the shoulder with a writ; and a solid lad, that knows three times five is fifteen, will get the better of them in the long run. But as to arguing with gentlemen of that sort, where's the good of it? You can never bring them to the point, say what you will; all you can get from them, is a farrago of fine words, that you can't understand without a dictionary."

"I am inclinable to think," said Mr Simkins, "that the young gentleman is rather of opinion to like pleasure better than business; and, to be sure, it's very excusable of him, because it's more agreeabler. And I must needs say, if I may be so free, I'm partly of the young gentleman's mind, for business is a deal more trouble."

"I hope, however," said Cecilia to Belfield, "your present situation is less irksome to you?"

"Any situation, madam, must be less irksome than that which I quitted: to write by rule, to compose by

necessity, to make the understanding, nature's first gift, subservient to interest, that meanest offspring of art!— when weary, listless, spiritless, to rack the head for invention, the memory for images, and the fancy for ornament and illusion; and when the mind is wholly occupied by its own affections and affairs, to call forth all its faculties for foreign subjects, uninteresting discussions, or fictitious incidents!—— Heavens! what a life *of struggle between the head and the heart! how cruel,* how unnatural a war between the intellects and the feelings!"

"As to these sort of things," said Mr Hobson, "I can't say I am much versed in them, by reason they are things I never much studied; but if I was to speak my notion, it is this; the best way to thrive in the world is to get money; but how is it to be got? Why by business: for business is to money, what fine words are to a lady, a sure road to success. Now I don't mean by this to be censorious upon the ladies, being they have nothing else to go by, for as to examining if a man knows any thing of the world, and that, they have nothing whereby to judge, knowing nothing of it themselves. So that when they are taken in by rogues and sharpers, the fault is all in the law, for making no proviso against their having money in their own hands. Let every one be trusted according to their headpiece: and what I say is this: a lady in them cases is much to be pitied, for she is obligated to take a man upon his own credit, which is tantamount to no credit at all, being what man will speak an ill word of himself? you may as well expect a bad shilling to cry out don't take me! That's what I say, and that's my way of giving my vote."

Cecilia, quite tired of these interruptions, and impatient to be gone, now said to Belfield, "I should be much obliged to you, Sir, if you could send to me the

man you speak of to-morrow morning. I wished, also, to consult you with regard to the route I ought to take. My purpose is to go to Nice, and as I am very desirous to travel expeditiously, you may perhaps be able to instruct me what is the best method for me to pursue."

"Come, Mr Hobson and Mr Simkins," cried Mrs Belfield, with a look of much significance and delight, "suppose you two and I was to walk into the next room? There's no need for us to hear all the young lady may have a mind to say."

"She has nothing to say, madam," cried Cecilia, "that the whole world may not hear. Neither is it my purpose to talk, but to listen, if Mr Belfield is at leisure to favour me with his advice."

"I must always be at leisure, and always be proud, madam," Belfield began, when Hobson, interrupting him, said, "I ask pardon, Sir, for intruding, but I only mean to wish the young lady good night. As to interfering with business, that's not my way, for it's not the right method, by reason——"

"We will listen to your reason, Sir," cried Belfield, "some other time; at present we will give you all credit for it unheard."

"Let every man speak his own maxim, Sir," cried Hobson; "for that's what I call fair arguing: but as to one person's speaking, and then making an answer for another into the bargain, why it's going to work nohow; you may as well talk to a counter, and think because you make a noise upon it with your own hand, it gives you the reply."

"Why, Mr Hobson," cried Mrs Belfield, "I am quite ashamed of you for being so dull! don't you see my son has something to say to the lady that you and I have no business to be meddling with?"

"I'm sure, ma'am, for my part," said Mr Simkins, "I'm very agreeable to going away, for as to putting

the young lady to the blush, it's what I would not do in no shape,"

"I only mean," said Mr Hobson, when he was interrupted by Mrs Belfield, who, out of all patience, now turned him out of the room by the shoulders, and, pulling Mr Simkins after, followed herself, and shut the door, though Cecilia, much provoked, desired she would stay, and declared repeatedly that all her business was public.

Belfield, who had looked ready to murder them all during this short scene, now approached Cecilia, and with an air of mingled spirit and respect, said, "I am much grieved, much confounded, madam, that your ears should be offended by speeches so improper to reach them; yet if it is possible I can have the honour of being of any use to you, in me, still, I hope, you feel you may confide. I am too distant from you in situation to give you reason to apprehend I can form any sinister views in serving you; and, permit me to add, I am too near you in mind, ever to give you the pain of bidding me remember that distance."

Cecilia then, extremely unwilling to shock a sensibility not more generous than jealous, determined to continue her enquiries, and, at the same time, to prevent any further misapprehension, by revealing her actual situation.

"I am sorry, Sir," she answered, "to have occasioned this disturbance; Mrs Belfield, I find, is wholly unacquainted with the circumstance which now carries me abroad, or it would not have happened."—

Here a little noise in the passage interrupting her, she heard Mrs Belfield, though in a low voice, say, "Hush, Sir, hush! you must not come in just now; you've caught me, I confess, rather upon the listening order; but to tell you the truth, I did not know what might be going forward. However, there's no admit-

tance now, I assure you, for my son's upon particular business with a lady, and Mr Hobson and Mr Simkins and I, have all been as good as turned out by them but just now."

Cecilia and Belfield, though they heard this speech with mutual indignation, had no time to mark or express it, as it was answered without in a voice at once loud and furious, "*You*, madam, may be content to listen here; pardon me if I am less humbly disposed!"

And the door was abruptly opened by young Delvile!

Cecilia, who half screamed from excess of astonishment, would scarcely, even by the presence of Belfield and his mother, have been restrained from flying to meet him, had his own aspect invited such a mark of tenderness; but far other was the case; when the door was open, he stopt short with a look half petrified, his feet seeming rooted to the spot upon which they stood.

"I declare I ask pardon, ma'am," cried Mrs Belfield, "but the interruption was no fault of mine, for the gentleman would come in; and—"

"It is no interruption, madam;" cried Belfield, "Mr Delvile does me nothing but honour."

"I thank you, Sir!" said Delvile, trying to recover and come forward, but trembling violently, and speaking with the most frigid coldness.

They were then, for a few instants, all silent; Cecilia, amazed by his arrival, still more amazed by his behaviour, feared to speak lest he meant not, as yet, to avow his marriage, and felt a thousand apprehensions that some new calamity had hurried him home: while Belfield was both hurt by his strangeness, and embarrassed for the sake of Cecilia; and his mother, though wondering at them all, was kept quiet by her son's looks.

The door was abruptly opened

Delvile then, struggling for an appearance of more ease, said, "I seem to have made a general confusion here:—pray, I beg"——

"None at all, Sir," said Belfield, and offered a chair to Cecilia.

"No, Sir," she answered, in a voice scarce audible, "I was just going." And again rang the bell.

"I fear I hurry you, madam?" cried Delvile, whose whole frame was now shaking with uncontrollable emotion; "you are upon business—I ought to beg your pardon—my entrance, I believe, was unseasonable."——

"Sir!" cried she, looking aghast at this speech.

"I should have been rather surprised," he added, "to have met you here, so late,—so unexpectedly,—so deeply engaged—had I not happened to see your servant in the street, who told me the honour I should be likely to have by coming."

"*Good God!*—" *exclaimed she, involuntarily*; but, checking herself as well as she could, she courtsied to Mrs Belfield, unable to speak to her, and avoiding even to look at Belfield, who respectfully hung back, she hastened out of the room: accompanied by Mrs Belfield, who again began the most voluble and vulgar apologies for the intrusion she had met with.

Delvile also, after a moment's pause, followed, saying, "Give me leave, madam, to see you to your carriage."

Cecilia then, notwithstanding Mrs Belfield still kept talking, could no longer refrain saying, "Good heaven, what does all this mean?"

"Rather for *me* is that question," he answered, in such agitation he could not, though he meant it, assist her into the chaise, "for mine, I believe, is the greater surprise!"

"*What surprise?*" *cried she,* "*explain, I conjure you!*"

"By and bye I will," he answered; "go on postilion."

"Where, Sir?"

"Where you came from, I suppose."

"What, Sir, back to Rumford?"

"Rumford!" exclaimed he, with encreasing disorder, "you came then from Suffolk hither?—from Suffolk to this very house?"

"Good heaven!" cried Cecilia, "come into the chaise, and let me speak and hear to be understood!"

"Who is that now in it?"

"My Maid."

"Your maid?—and she waits for you thus at the door?"—

"What, what is it you mean?"

"Tell the man, madam, whither to go."

"I don't know myself—any where you please—do you order him."

"*I* order him!——you came not hither to receive orders from *me!*—where was it you had purposed to rest?"

"I don't know—I meant to go to Mrs Hill's—I have no place taken."—

"No place taken!" repeated he, in a voice faultering between passion and grief; "you purposed, then, to stay here?—I have perhaps driven you away?"

"Here!" cried Cecilia, mingling, in her turn, indignation with surprise, "gracious heaven! what is it you mean to doubt?"

"Nothing!" cried he, with emphasis, "I never *have* had, I never *will* have a doubt! I will *know*, I will have *conviction* for every thing! Postilion, drive to St James's-square!—to Mr Delvile's. There, madam, I will wait upon you."

"No! stay, postilion!" called out Cecilia, seized with terror inexpressible; "let me get out, let me speak with you at once!"

"It cannot be; I will follow you in a few minutes ——drive on, postilion!"

"No, no!—I will not go—I dare not leave you—unkind Delvile!——what is it you suspect?"

"Cecilia," cried he, putting his hand upon the chaise-door, "I have ever believed you spotless as an angel! and, by heaven! I believe you so still, in spite of appearances—in defiance of every thing!—— Now then be satisfied;—I will be with you very soon. Meanwhile, take this letter, I was just going to send to you.—Postilion, drive on, or be at your peril!"

The man waited no further orders, nor regarded the prohibition of Cecilia, who called out to him without ceasing; but he would not listen to her till he got to the end of the street; he then stopt, and she broke the seal of her letter, and read, by the light of the lamps, enough to let her know that Delvile had written it upon the road from Dover to London, to acquaint her his mother was now better, and had taken pity of his suspense and impatience, and insisted upon his coming privately to England, to satisfy himself fully about Mr Monckton, communicate his marriage to his father, and give those orders towards preparing for its being made public, which his unhappy precipitation in leaving the kingdom had prevented.

This letter, which, though written but a few hours before she received it, was full of tenderness, gratitude and anxiety for her happiness, instantly convinced her that his strange behaviour had been wholly the effect of a sudden impulse of jealousy; excited by so unexpectedly finding her in town, at the very house where his father had assured him she had an improper connexion, and alone, so suspiciously, with the young man affirmed to be her favourite. He knew nothing of the ejectment, nothing of any reason for her leaving Suffolk,

every thing had the semblance of no motive but to indulge a private and criminal inclination.

These thoughts, which confusedly, yet forcibly, rushed upon her mind, brought with them at once an excuse for his conduct, and an alarm for his danger; "He must think," she cried, "I came to town only to meet Mr Belfield!" then, opening the chaise-door herself, she jumpt out, and ran back into Portland-street, too impatient to argue with the postilion to return with her, and stopt not till she came to Mrs Belfield's house.

She knocked at the door with violence; Mrs Belfield came to it herself; "Where," cried she, hastily entering as she spoke, "are the gentlemen?"

"Lack-a-day! ma'am," answered Mrs Belfield, "they are both gone out."

"Gone out?—where to?—which way?"

"I am sure I can't tell, ma'am, no more than you can; but I am sadly afraid they'll have a quarrel before they've done."

"Oh heaven!" cried Cecilia, who now doubted not a second duel, "tell me, shew me, which way they went?"

"Why, ma'am, to let you into the secret," answered Mrs Belfield, "only I beg you'll take no notice of it to my son, but, seeing them so much out of sorts, I begged the favour of Mr Simkins, as Mr Hobson was gone out to his club, just to follow them, and see what they were after."

Cecilia was much rejoiced this caution had been taken, and determined to wait his return. She would have sent for the chaise to follow her; but Mrs Belfield kept no servant, and the maid of the house was employed in preparing the supper.

When Mr Simkins came back, she learnt, after various interruptions from Mrs Belfield, and much

delay from his own slowness and circumlocution, that he had pursued the two gentlemen to the * * * * coffee-house.

She hesitated not a moment in resolving to follow them: she feared the failure of any commission, nor did she know whom to entrust with one: and the danger was too urgent for much deliberation. She begged, therefore, that Mr Simkins would walk with her to the chaise; but hearing that the coffee-house was another way, she desired Mrs Belfield to let the servant run and order it to Mrs Roberts, in Fetter-lane, and then eagerly requested Mr Simkins to accompany her on foot till they met with an hackney-coach.

They then set out, Mr Simkins feeling proud and happy in being allowed to attend her, while Cecilia, glad of any protection, accepted his offer of continuing with her, even after she met with an hackney-coach.

When she arrived at the coffee-house, she ordered the coachman to desire the master of it to come and speak with her.

He came, and she hastily called out, "Pray, are two gentlemen here?"

"Here are several gentlemen here, madam."

"Yes, yes,—but are two upon any business—any particular business—"

"Two gentlemen, madam, came about half an hour ago, and asked for a room to themselves."

"And where are they now?—are they up stairs?—down stairs?—where are they?"

"One of them went away in about ten minutes, and the other soon after."

Bitterly chagrined and disappointed, she knew not what step to take next; but, after some consideration, concluded upon obeying Delvile's own directions, and proceeding to St James's-square, where alone, now, she

seemed to have any chance of meeting with him. Gladly, however, she still consented to be accompanied by Mr Simkins, for her dread of being alone, at so late an hour, in an hackney-coach, was invincible. Whether Delvile himself had any authority for directing her to his father's, or whether, in the perturbation of his new-excited and agonising sensations of jealousy, he had forgotten that any authority was necessary, she knew not; nor could she now interest herself in the doubt: a second scene, such as had so lately passed with Mr Monckton, occupied all her thoughts: she knew the too great probability that the high spirit of Belfield would disdain making the explanation which Delvile in his present agitation might require, and the consequence of such a refusal must almost inevitably be fatal.

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Chapter vij.

A PURSUIT.

THE moment the porter came to the door, Cecilia eagerly called out from the coach, "Is Mr Delvile here?"

"Yes, madam," he answered, "but I believe he is engaged."

"Oh no matter for any engagement!" cried she, "open the door,—I must speak to him this moment!"

"If you will please to step into the parlour, madam, I will tell his gentleman you are here; but he will be much displeased if he is disturbed without notice."

"Ah heaven!" exclaimed she, "what Mr Delvile are you talking of?"

"*My* master, madam."

Cecilia, who had got out of the coach, now hastily returned to it, and was some time in too great agony to

answer either the porter, who desired some message, or the coachman, who asked whither he was to drive. To see Mr Delvile, unprotected by his son, and contrary to his orders, appeared to her insupportable; yet to what place could she go? where was she likely to meet with Delvile? how could he find her if she went to Mrs Hill's? and in what other house could she at present claim admittance?

After a little recovering from this cruel shock, she ventured, though in a faultering voice, to enquire whether young Mr Delvile had been there?

"Yes, madam," the porter answered; "we thought he was abroad, but he called just now, and asked if any lady had been at the house. He would not even stay to go up to my master, and we have not dared tell him of his arrival."

This a little revived her; to hear that he had actually been enquiring for her, at least assured her of his safety from any immediate violence, and she began to hope she might now possibly meet with him time enough to explain all that had past in his absence, and occasioned her seemingly strange and suspicious situation at Belfield's. She compelled herself, therefore, to summon courage for seeing his father, since, as he had directed her to the house, she concluded he would return there to seek her, when he had wandered elsewhere to no purpose.

She then, though with much timidity and reluctance, sent a message to Mr Delvile to entreat a moment's audience.

An answer was brought her that he saw no company so late at night.

Losing now all dread of his reproaches, in her superior dread of missing Delvile, she called out earnestly to the man, "Tell him, Sir, I beseech him not to refuse me! tell him I have something to communicate that requires his immediate attention!"

The servant obeyed; but soon returning, said his master desired him to acquaint her he was engaged every moment he stayed in town, and must positively decline seeing her.

"Go to him again," cried the harassed Cecilia, "assure him I come not from myself, but by the desire of one he most values: tell him I entreat but permission to wait an hour in his house, and that I have no other place in the world whither I can go!"

Mr Delvile's own gentleman brought, with evident concern, the answer to this petition; which was, that while the Honourable Mr Delvile was himself alive, he thought the desire of any other person concerning his house, was taking with him a very extraordinary liberty; and that he was now going to bed, and had given orders to his servants to carry him no more messages whatsoever, upon pain of instant dismission.

Cecilia now seemed totally destitute of all resource, and for a few dreadful minutes, gave herself up to utter despondency: nor, when she recovered her presence of mind, could she form any better plan than that of waiting in the coach to watch the return of Delvile.

She told the coachman, therefore, to drive to a corner of the square, begging Mr Simkins to have patience, which he promised with much readiness, and endeavoured to give her comfort, by talking without cessation.

She waited here near half an hour. She then feared the disappointment of Delvile in not meeting her at first, had made him conclude she meant not to obey his directions, and had perhaps urged him to call again upon Belfield, whom he might fancy privy to her non-appearance. This was new horror to her, and she resolved at all risks to drive to Portland-street, and enquire if Belfield himself was returned home. Yet, lest they should mutually be pursuing each other all

night, she stopt again at Mr Delvile's, and left word with the porter, that if young Mr Delvile should come home, he would hear of the person he was enquiring for at Mrs Roberts's in Fetter-lane. To Belfield's she did not dare to direct him; and it was her intention, if there she procured no new intelligence, to leave the same message, and then go to Mrs Roberts without further delay. *To make such an arrangement with a* servant who knew not her connection with his young master, was extremely repugnant to her; but the exigence was too urgent for scruples, and there was nothing to which she would not have consented, to prevent the fatal catastrophe she apprehended.

When she came to Belfield's, not daring to enter the house, she sent in Mr Simkins, to desire that Mrs Belfield would be so good as to step to the coach door.

"Is your son, madam," she cried, eagerly, "come home? and is any body with him?"

"No, *ma'am; he has never once been across the* threshold since that gentleman took him out; and I am half out of my wits to think"——

"Has that gentleman," interrupted Cecilia, "been here any more?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's what I was going to tell you; he came again just now, and said"——

"Just now?—good heaven!—and which way is he gone?"

"Why he is after no good, I am afraid, for he was in a great passion, and would hardly hear any thing I said."

"Pray, pray answer me quick!—where, which way did he go?"

"Why, he asked me if I knew whither my son was come from the * * coffee-house; why, says I, I'm sure I can't tell, for if it had not been for Mr Simkins, I should not so much as have known he ever went to

the * * coffee-house; however, I hope he a'n't come away, because if he is, poor Miss Beverley will have had all that trouble for nothing; for she's gone after him in a prodigious hurry; and upon my only saying that, he seemed quite beside himself, and said, if I don't meet with your son at the * * coffee-house myself, pray, when he comes in, tell him I shall be highly obliged to him to call there; and then he went away, in as great a pet as ever you saw."

Cecilia listened to this account with the utmost terror and misery; the suspicions of Delvile would now be aggravated, and the message he had left for Belfield, would by him be regarded as a defiance. Again, however, to the * * coffee-house she instantly ordered the coach, an immediate explanation from herself seeming the only possible chance for preventing the most horrible conclusion to this unfortunate and eventful evening.

She was still accompanied by Mr Simkins, and, but that she attended to nothing he said, would not inconsiderably have been tormented by his conversation. She sent him immediately into the coffee-room, to enquire if either of the gentlemen were then in the house.

He returned to her with a waiter, who said, "One of them, madam, called again just now, but he only stopt to write a note, which he left to be given to the gentleman who came with him at first. He is but this moment gone, and I don't think he can be at the bottom of the street."

"Oh drive then, gallop after him!"—cried Cecilia; "coachman! go this moment!"

"My horses are tired," said the man, "they have been out all day, and they will gallop no further, if I don't stop and give them a drink."

Cecilia, too full of hope and impatience for this delay, forced open the door herself, and without saying

another word, jumped out of the carriage, with intention to run down the street; but the coachman immediately seizing her, protested she should not stir till he was paid.

In the utmost agony of mind at an hindrance by which she imagined Delvile would be lost to her perhaps for ever, she put her hand in her pocket, in order to give up her purse for her liberty; but Mr Simkins, who was making a tiresome expostulation with the coachman, took it himself, and declaring he would not see the lady cheated, began a tedious calculation of his fare.

"O pay him any thing!" cried she, "and let us be gone! an instant's delay may be fatal!"

Mr Simkins, too earnest to conquer the coachman to attend to her distress, continued his prolix harangue concerning a disputed shilling, appealing to some gathering spectators upon the justice of his cause; while his adversary, who was far from sober, still held Cecilia, saying the coach had been hired for the lady, and he would be paid by herself.

"Good God!" cried the agitated Cecilia,—"give him my purse at once!—give him every thing he desires!"—

The coachman, at this permission, encreased his demands, and Mr Simkins, taking the number of his coach, protested he would summons him to the Court of Conscience the next morning. A gentleman, who then came out of the coffee-house, offered to assist the lady, but the coachman, who still held her arm, swore he would have his right.

"Let me go! let me pass!" cried she, with encreasing eagerness and emotion; "detain me at your peril! —release me this moment!—only let me run to the end of the street,—good God! good Heaven! detain me not for mercy!"

Mr Simkins, humbly desiring her not to be in haste, began a formal apology for his conduct; but the inebriety of the coachman became evident; a mob was collecting; Cecilia, breathless with vehemence and terror, was encircled, yet struggled in vain to break away; and the stranger gentleman, protesting, with sundry compliments, he would himself take care of her, very freely seized her hand.

This moment, for the unhappy Cecilia, teemed with calamity; she was wholly overpowered; terror for Delvile, horror for herself, hurry, confusion, heat and fatigue, all assailing her at once, while all means of repelling them were denied her, the attack was too strong for her fears, feelings, and faculties, and her reason suddenly, yet totally failing her, she madly called out, "He will be gone! he will be gone! and I must follow him to Nice!"

The gentleman now retreated; but Mr Simkins, who was talking to the mob, did not hear her; and the coachman, too much intoxicated to perceive her rising frenzy, persisted in detaining her.

"I am going to France!" cried she, still more wildly, "why do you stop me? he will die if I do not see him, he will bleed to death!"

The coachman, still unmoved, began to grow very abusive; but the stranger, touched by compassion, gave up his attempted gallantry, and Mr Simkins, much astonished, entreated her not to be frightened: she was, however, in no condition to listen to him; with a strength hitherto unknown to her, she forcibly disengaged herself from her persecutors; yet her senses were wholly disordered; she forgot her situation, her intention, and herself; the single idea of Delvile's danger took sole possession of her brain, though all connection with its occasion was lost, and the moment she was released, she fervently clasped her hands, exclaiming, "I will yet

heal his wound, even at the hazard of my life!" and springing forward, was almost instantly out of sight.

Mr Simkins now, much alarmed, and earnestly calling after her, entered into a compromise with the coachman, that he might attend her; but the length of his negociation defeated its purpose, and before he was at liberty to follow her, all trace was lost by which he might have overtaken her. He stopt every passenger he met to make enquiries, but though they led him on some way, they led him on in vain; and, after a useless and ill-managed pursuit, he went quietly to his own home, determining to acquaint Mrs Belfield with what had happened the next morning.

Mean while the frantic Cecilia escaped both pursuit and insult by the velocity of her own motion. She called aloud upon Delvile as she flew to the end of the street. No Delvile was there!—she turned the corner; yet saw nothing of him; she still went on, though unknowing whither, the distraction of her mind every instant growing greater, from the inflammation of fatigue, heat, and disappointment. She was spoken to repeatedly; she was even caught once or twice by her riding habit; but she forced herself along by her own vehement rapidity, not hearing what was said, nor heeding what was thought. Delvile, bleeding by the arm of Belfield, was the image before her eyes, and took such full possession of her senses, that still, as she ran on, she fancied it in view. She scarce touched the ground; she scarce felt her own motion; she seemed as if endued with supernatural speed, gliding from place to place, from street to street; with no consciousness of any plan, and following no other direction than that of darting forward where-ever there was most room, and turning back when she met with any obstruction; till quite spent and exhausted, she abruptly ran into a yet open shop, where, breathless and panting, she sunk

upon the floor, and, with a look disconsolate and helpless, sat for some time without speaking.

The people of the house, concluding at first she was a woman of the town, were going roughly to turn her out; but soon seeing their mistake, by the evident distraction of her air and manner, they enquired of some idle people who, late as it was, had followed her, if any of them knew who she was, or whence she came?

They could give no account of her, but supposed she was broke loose from Bedlam.

Cecilia then, wildly starting up, exclaimed, "No, no,—I am not mad,—I am going to Nice—to my husband."

"She's quite crazy," said the man of the house, who was a Pawn-Broker; "we had better get rid of her before she grows mischievous."

"She's somebody broke out from a private mad house, I dare say," said a man who had followed her into the shop; "and if you were to take care of her a little while, ten to one but you'll get a reward for it."

"She's a gentlewoman, sure enough," said the mistress of the house, "because she's got such good things on."

And then, under pretence of trying to find some direction to her upon a letter, or paper, she insisted upon searching her pockets: here, however, she was disappointed in her expectations: her purse was in the custody of Mr Simkins, but neither her terror nor distress had saved her from the daring dexterity of villainy, and her pockets, in the mob, had been rifled of whatever else they contained. The woman therefore hesitated some time whether to take charge of her or not: but being urged by the man who made the proposal, and who said they might depend upon seeing her soon advertised, as having escaped from her keepers, they ventured to undertake her.

Mean while she endeavoured again to get out, calling aloud upon Delvile to rescue her, but so wholly bereft of sense and recollection, she could give no account who she was, whence she came, or whither she wished to go.

They then carried her up stairs, and attempted to make her lie down upon a bed; but supposing she refused because it was not of straw, they desisted; and, taking away the candle, locked the door, and all went to rest.

In this miserable condition, alone and raving, she was left to pass the night! in the early part of it, she called upon Delvile without intermission, beseeching him to come to her defence in one moment, and deploring his death the next; but afterwards, her strength being wholly exhausted by these various exertions and fatigues, she threw herself upon the floor, and lay for some minutes quite still. Her head then began to grow cooler, as the fever into which terror and immoderate exercise had thrown her abated, and her memory recovered its functions.

This was, however, only a circumstance of horror to her: she found herself shut up in a place of confinement, without light, without knowledge where she was, and not a human being near her!

Yet the same returning reason which enabled her to take this view of her own situation, brought also to her mind that in which she had left Delvile;—under all the perturbation of new-kindled jealousy, just calling upon Belfield,—Belfield, tenacious of his honour even more than himself,—to satisfy doubts of which the very mention would be received as a challenge!

"Oh yet, oh yet," cried she, "let me fly and overtake them!—I may find them before morning, and to-night it must surely have been too late for this work of death!"

She then arose to feel for the door, and succeeded; but it was locked, and no effort she could make enabled her to open it.

Her agony was unspeakable; she called out with violence upon the people of the house, conjured them to set her at liberty, offered any reward for their assistance, and threatened them with a prosecution if detained.

Nobody, however, came near her: some slept on notwithstanding all the disturbance she could make, and others, though awakened by her cries, concluded them the ravings of a mad woman, and listened not to what she said.

Her head was by no means in a condition to bear this violence of distress; every pulse was throbbing, every vein seemed bursting, her reason, so lately returned, could not bear the repetition of such a shock, and from supplicating for help with all the energy of feeling and understanding, she soon continued the cry from mere vehemence of distraction.

Thus dreadfully passed the night; and in the morning, when the woman of the house came to see after her, she found her raving with such frenzy, and desperation, that her conscience was perfectly at ease in the treatment she had given her, being now firmly satisfied she required the strictest confinement.

She still, however, tried to get away; talked of Delvile without cessation, said she should be too late to serve him, told the woman she desired but to prevent murder, and repeatedly called out, "Oh beloved of my heart! wait but a moment, and I will snatch thee from destruction!"

Mrs Wyers, this woman, now sought no longer to draw from her whence she came, or who she was, but heard her frantic exclamations without any emotion, contentedly concluding that her madness was incurable:

and though she was in a high fever, refused all sustenance, and had every symptom of an alarming and dangerous malady, she was fully persuaded that her case was that of decided insanity, and had not any notion of temporary or accidental alienation of reason.

All she could think of by way of indulgence to her, was to bring her a quantity of straw, having heard that mad people were fond of it; and putting it in a heap in one corner of the room, she expected to see her eagerly fly at it.

Cecilia, however, distracted as she was, was eager for nothing but to escape, which was constantly her aim, alike when violent or when quiet. Mrs Wyers, finding this, kept her closely confined, and the door always locked, whether absent or present.

Chapter viij.

AN ENCOUNTER.

TWO whole days passed thus; no enquiries reached Mrs Wyers, and she found in the news-papers no advertisement. Meanwhile Cecilia grew worse every moment, tasted neither drink nor food, raved incessantly, called out twenty times in a breath, "Where is he? which way is he gone?" and implored the woman by the most pathetic remonstrances, to save her unhappy Delvile, *dearer to her than life, more precious than peace or rest!*

At other times she talked of her marriage, of the displeasure of his family, and of her own remorse; entreated the woman not to betray her, and promised to spend the remnant of her days in the heaviness of sorrow and contrition.

Again her fancy roved, and Mr Monckton took sole

possession of it. She reproached him for his perfidy, she bewailed that he was massacred, she would not a moment out-live him, and wildly declared *her last remains should moulder in his hearse!* And thus, though naturally and commonly of a silent and quiet disposition, she was now not a moment still, for the irregular starts of a terrified and disordered imagination, were changed into the constant ravings of morbid delirium.

The woman, growing uneasy from her uncertainty of pay for her trouble, asked the advice of some of her friends what was proper for her to do; and they counselled her to put an advertisement into the papers herself the next morning.

The following, therefore, was drawn up and sent to the printer of the Daily Advertiser.

MADNESS.

Whereas a crazy young lady, tall, fair complexioned, with blue eyes and light hair, ran into the Three Blue Balls, in——street, on Thursday night, the 2nd instant, and has been kept there since out of charity. She was dressed in a riding habit. Whoever she belongs to is desired to send after her immediately. She has been treated with the utmost care and tenderness. She talks much of some person by the name of Delvile.

N.B.—She had no money about her.

May, 1780.

This had but just been sent off, when Mr Wyers, the man of the house, coming up stairs, said, "Now we shall have two of them, for here's the crazy old gentleman below, that says he has just heard in the neighbourhood of what has happened to us, and he desires to see the poor lady."

"It's as well let him come up, then," answered Mrs

Wyers, "for he goes to all sort of places and people, and ten to one but he'll bustle about till he finds out who she is."

Mr Wyers then went down stairs to send him up.

He came instantly. It was Albany, who in his vagrant rambles, having heard an unknown mad lady was at this pawn-broker's, came, with his customary eagerness to visit and serve the unhappy, to see what could be done for her.

When he entered the room, she was sitting upon the bed, her eyes earnestly fixed upon the window, from which she was privately indulging a wish to make her escape. Her dress was in much disorder, her fine hair was dishevelled, and the feathers of her riding hat were broken and half falling down, some shading her face, others reaching to her shoulder.

"Poor lady!" cried Albany, approaching her, "how long has she been in this state?"

She started at the sound of a new voice, she looked round,—but what was the astonishment of Albany to see who it was!—He stept back,—he came forward,—he doubted his own senses,—he looked at her earnestly,—he turned from her to look at the woman of the house,—he cast his eyes round the room itself, and then, lifting up his hands, "O sight of woe!" he cried, "the generous and good! the kind reliever of distress! the benign sustainer of misery!——is *This* Cecilia!"——

Cecilia, imperfectly recollecting, though not understanding him, sunk down at his feet, tremblingly called out, "Oh, if he is yet to be saved, if already he is not murdered,—go to him! fly after him! you will presently overtake him, he is only in the next street, I left him there myself, his sword drawn, and covered with human blood!"

"Sweet powers of kindness and compassion!" cried

the old man, "look upon this creature with pity! she who raised the depressed, she who cheared the unhappy! she whose liberal hand turned lamentations into joy! who never with a tearless eye could hear the voice of sorrow!—is *This* she herself!—can *This* be Cecilia!"

"O do not wait to talk!" cried she, "go to him now, or you will never see him more! the hand of death is on him,—cold, clay-cold is its touch! he is breathing his last—Oh murdered Delvile! massacred husband of my heart! groan not so piteously! fly to him, and weep over him!—fly to him and pluck the poniard from his wounded bosom!"

"Oh sounds of anguish and horror!" cried the melted moralist, tears running quick down his rugged cheeks; "melancholy indeed is this sight, humiliating to morality! such is human strength, such human felicity!——weak as our virtues, frail as our guilty natures!"

"Ah," cried she, more wildly, "no one will save me now! I am married, and no one will listen to me! ill were the auspices under which I gave my hand! Oh it was a work of darkness, unacceptable and offensive! it has been sealed, therefore, with blood, and to-morrow it will be signed with murder!"

"Poor distracted creature!" exclaimed he, "thy pangs I have felt, but thy innocence I have forfeited! —my own wounds bleed afresh,——my own brain threatens new frenzy."——

Then, starting up, "Good woman," he added, "kindly attend her,—I will seek out her friends, put her into bed, comfort, sooth, compose her.——I will come to you again, and as soon as I can."

He then hurried away.

"Oh hour of joy!" cried Cecilia, "he is gone to rescue him! oh blissful moment! he will yet be snatched from slaughter!"

The woman lost not an instant in obeying the orders she had received; she was put into bed, and nothing was neglected, as far as she had power and thought, to give a look of decency and attention to her accommodations.

He had not left them an hour, when Mary, the maid who had attended her from Suffolk, came to enquire for her lady. Albany, who was now wandering over the town in search of some of her friends, and who entered every house where he imagined she was known, had hastened to that of Mrs Hill the first of any, as he was well acquainted with her obligations to Cecilia; there, Mary herself, by the directions which her lady had given Mrs Belfield, had gone; and there, in the utmost astonishment and uneasiness, had continued till Albany brought news of her.

She was surprised and afflicted beyond measure, not only at the state of her mind, and her health, but to find her in a bed and an apartment so unsuitable to her rank of life, and so different to what she had ever been accustomed. She wept bitterly while she enquired at the bed-side how her lady did, but wept still more, when, without answering, or seeming to know her, Cecilia started up, and called out, "I must be removed this moment! I must go to St James's-square,—if I stay an instant longer, the passing-bell will toll, and then how shall I be in time for the funeral?"

Mary, alarmed and amazed, turned hastily from her to the woman of the house, who calmly said, the lady was only in a raving fit, and must not be minded.

Extremely frightened at this intelligence, she entreated her to be quiet and lie still. But Cecilia grew suddenly so violent, that force only could keep her from rising; and Mary, unused to dispute her commands, prepared to obey them.

Mrs Wyers now in her turn opposed in vain; Cecilia

was peremptory, and Mary became implicit, and, though not without much difficulty, she was again dressed in her riding habit. This operation over, she moved towards the door, the temporary strength of delirium giving her a hardiness that combated fever, illness, fatigue, and feebleness. Mary, however averse and fearful, assisted her, and Mrs Wyers, compelled by the obedience of her own servant, went before them to order a chair.

Cecilia, however, felt her weakness when she attempted to move down stairs; her feet tottered, and her head became dizzy; she leaned it against Mary, who called aloud for more help, and made her sit down till it came. Her resolution, however, was not to be altered; a stubbornness, wholly foreign to her genuine character, now made her stern and positive; and Mary, who thought her submission indispensable, cried, but did not offer to oppose her.

Mr and Mrs Wyers both came up to assist in supporting her, and Mr Wyers offered to carry her in his arms; but she would not consent; when she came to the bottom of the stairs, her head grew worse, she again lent it upon Mary, but Mr Wyers was obliged to hold them both. She still, however, was firm in her determination, and was making another effort to proceed, when Delvile rushed hastily into the shop.

He had just encountered Albany; who, knowing his acquaintance, though ignorant of his marriage with Cecilia, had informed him where to seek her.

He was going to make enquiry if he was come to the right house, when he perceived her, —— feeble, shaking, leaning upon one person, and half carried by another!——he started back, staggered, gasped for breath,——but finding they were proceeding, advanced with trepidation, furiously calling out, "Hold! stop!

——what is it you are doing? Monsters of savage barbarity, are you murdering my wife?"

The well-known voice no sooner struck the ears of Cecilia, than instantly recollecting it, she screamed, and, in suddenly endeavouring to spring forward, fell to the ground.

Delvile had vehemently advanced to catch her in his arms and save her fall, which her unexpected quickness had prevented her attendants from doing; but the sight of her changed complection, and the wildness of her eyes and air, again made him start,——his blood froze through his veins, and he stood looking at her, cold and almost petrified.

Her own recollection of him seemed lost already; and exhausted by the fatigue she had gone through in dressing and coming down stairs, she remained still and quiet, forgetting her design of proceeding, and forming no new one for returning.

Mary, to whom, as to all her fellow servants, the marriage of Cecilia had been known, before she left the country, now desired from Delvile directions what was to be done.

Delvile, starting suddenly at this call from the deepest horror into the most desperate rage, fiercely exclaimed, "Inhuman wretches! unfeeling, execrable wretches, what is it you have done to her? how came she hither?——who brought her?——who dragged her?——by what infamous usage has she been sunk into this state?"

"Indeed, sir, I don't know!" cried Mary.

"I assure you, sir," said Mrs Wyers, "the lady——"

"Peace!" cried he, furiously, "I will not hear your falsehoods!—peace, and begone!"——

Then, casting himself upon the ground by her side, "Oh my Cecilia," he cried, "where hast thou been thus long? how have I lost thee? what dreadful calamity

has befallen thee?—answer me, my love! raise your sweet head and answer me!——oh speak!——say to me any thing; the bitterest words will be mercy to this silence!"——

Cecilia then, suddenly looking up, called out with great quickness, "Who are you?"

"Who am I!" cried he, amazed and affrighted.

"I should be glad you would go away," cried she, in a hurrying manner, "for you are quite unknown to me."

Delvile, unconscious of her insanity, and attributing to resentment this aversion and repulse, hastily moved from her, mournfully answering, "Well indeed may you disclaim me, refuse all forgiveness, load me with hatred and reproach, and consign me to eternal anguish! I have merited severer punishment still; I have behaved like a monster, and I am abhorrent to myself!"

Cecilia now, half rising, and regarding him with mingled terror and anger, eagerly exclaimed, "If you do not mean to mangle and destroy me, begone this instant."

"To mangle you!" repeated Delvile, shuddering, "how horrible!—but I deserve it!—look not, however, so terrified, and I will tear myself away from you. Suffer me but to assist in removing you from this place, and I will only watch you at a distance, and never see you more till you permit me to approach you."

"Why, why," cried Cecilia, with a look of perplexity and impatience, "will you not tell me your name, and where you come from?"

"Do you not know me?" said he, struck with new horror; "or do you only mean to kill me by the question?"

"Do you bring me any message from Mr Monckton?"

"*From Mr Monckton?—no; but he lives and will recover.*"

"I thought you had been Mr Monckton yourself."

"Too cruel, yet justly cruel Cecilia!—is then Delvile utterly renounced?—the guilty, the unhappy Delvile!—is he cast off for ever? have you driven him wholly from your heart? do you deny him even a place in your remembrance?"

"Is your name, then, Delvile?"

"O what is it you mean? is it me or my name you *thus disown?*"

"'Tis a name," cried she, sitting up, "I well remember to have heard, and once I loved it, and three times I called upon it in the dead of night. And when I was cold and wretched, I cherished it; and when I was abandoned and left alone, I repeated it and sung to it."

"*All-gracious powers!*" cried *Delvile*, "*her reason* is utterly gone!" And, hastily rising, he desperately added, "what is death to this blow?—Cecilia, I am content to part with thee!"

Mary now, and Mrs Wyers, poured upon him eagerly an account of her illness, and insanity, her desire of removal, and their inability to control her.

Delvile, however, made no answer; he scarce heard them: the deepest despair took possession of his mind, and, rooted to the spot where he stood, he contemplated *in dreadful stillness the fallen and altered object of his* best hopes and affections; already in her faded cheeks and weakened frame, his agonising terror read the quick impending destruction of all his earthly happiness! the sight was too much for his fortitude, and almost for his understanding; and when his woe became utterable, he wrung his hands, and groaning aloud, called out, "Art thou gone so soon! my wife! my Cecilia! have I lost thee already?"

Cecilia, with utter insensibility to what was passing, now suddenly, and with a rapid yet continued motion, turned her head from side to side, her eyes wildly glaring, and yet apparently regarding nothing.

"Dreadful! dreadful!" exclaimed Delvile, "what a sight is this!" and turning from her to the people of the house, he angrily said, "why is she here upon the floor? could you not even allow her a bed? Who attends her? Who waits upon her? Why has nobody sent for help?—Don't answer me,—I will not hear you, fly this moment for a physician,—bring two, bring three—bring all you can find?"

Then, still looking from Cecilia, whose sight he could no longer support, he consulted with Mary whither she should be conveyed: and, as the night was far advanced, and no place was prepared for her elsewhere, they soon agreed that she could only be removed up stairs.

Delvile now attempted to carry her in his arms; but trembling and unsteady, he had not strength to sustain her; yet not enduring to behold the helplessness he could not assist, he conjured them to be careful and gentle, and, committing her to their trust, ran out himself for a physician.

Cecilia resisted them with her utmost power, imploring them not to bury her alive, and averring she had received intelligence they meant to entomb her with Mr Monckton.

They put her, however, to bed, but her raving grew still more wild and incessant.

Delvile soon returned with a physician, but had not courage to attend him to her room. He waited for him at the foot of the stairs, where, hastily stopping him,

"Well, sir," he cried, "is it not all over? is it not impossible she can live?"

"She is very ill, indeed, sir," he answered, "but I have given directions which perhaps——"

"*Perhaps!*" interrupted Delvile, shuddering; "do not stab me with such a word!"

"She is very delirious," he continued, "but as her fever is very high, that is not so material. If the orders I have given take effect, and the fever is got under, all the rest will be well of course."

He then went away; leaving Delvile as much thunderstruck by answers so alarming, as if he had consulted him in full hope, and without even suspicion of her danger.

The moment he recovered from this shock, he flew out of the house for more advice.

He returned and brought with him two physicians.

They confirmed the directions already given, but would pronounce nothing decisively of her situation.

Delvile, half mad with the acuteness of his misery, *charged them all with want of skill, and wrote instantly* into the country for Dr Lyster.

He went out himself in search of a messenger to ride off express, though it was midnight, with his letter; and then, returning, he was hastening to her room, but, while yet at the door, hearing her still raving, his horror conquered his eagerness, and, hurrying down stairs, he spent the remnant of the long and seemingly endless night in the shop.

Chapter ix.

A TRIBUTE.

MEAN-WHILE Cecilia went through very severe discipline, sometimes strongly opposing it, at other times scarce sensible what was done to her.

The whole of the next day passed in much the same

manner, neither did the next night bring any visible alteration. She had now nurses and attendants even more than sufficient, for Delvile had no relief but from calling in more help. His terror of again seeing her encreased with his forbearance; the interview which had already past had almost torn him asunder, and losing all courage for attempting to enter her room, he now spent almost all his time upon the stairs which led to it. *Whenever she was still, he seated himself at her* chamber door, where, if he could hear her breathe or move, a sudden hope of her recovery gave to him a momentary extasy that recompensed all his sufferings. But the instant she spoke, unable to bear the sound of so loved a voice uttering nothing but the incoherent ravings of lightheadedness, he hastened down stairs, and flying out of the house, walked in the neighbouring streets, till he could again gather courage to enquire or to listen how she went on.

The following morning, however, Dr Lyster came, and every hope revived. He flew to embrace him, told him instantly his marriage with Cecilia, and besought him by some superior effort of his extraordinary abilities to save him the distraction of her loss.

"My good friend," cried the worthy Doctor, "what *is this you ask of me? and how can this poor young* lady herself want advice more than you do? Do you think these able physicians actually upon the spot, with all the experience of full practice in London to assist their skill, want a petty Doctor out of the country to come and teach them what is right?"

"I have more reliance upon you," cried Delvile, "than upon the whole faculty; come, therefore, and prescribe for her,—take some new course"—

"Impossible, my good Sir, impossible! I must not lose my wits from vanity, because you have lost yours from affliction. I could not refuse to come to you

when you wrote to me with such urgency, and I will now go and see the young lady, as a *friend*, with all my heart. I am sorry for you at my soul, Mr Mortimer! She is a lovely young creature, and has an understanding, for her years and sex, unequalled."

"Never mention her to me!" cried the impatient Delvile, "I cannot bear it! Go up to her, dear Doctor, and if you want a consultation, send, if you please, for every physician in town."

Dr Lyster desired only that those who had already attended might be summoned; and then, giving up to his entreaties the accustomed ceremonial of waiting for them, he went to Cecilia.

Delvile did not dare accompany him; and so well was he acquainted with his plainness and sincerity, that though he expected his return with eagerness, he no sooner heard him upon the stairs, than fearing to know his opinion, he hastily snatched up his hat, and rushed vehemently out of the house to avoid him.

He continued to walk about the streets, till even the dread of ill news was less horrible to him than this voluntary suspense, and then he returned to the house.

He found Dr Lyster in a small back parlour, which Mrs Wyers, finding she should now be well paid, had appropriated for Delvile's use.

Delvile, putting his hand upon the Doctor's shoulder, said, "Well, my dear Dr Lyster, *you*, still, I hope"—

"I would I could make you easy!" interrupted the Doctor; "yet, if you are rational, one comfort, at all events, I can give you; the crisis seems approaching, and either she will recover, or before to-morrow morning"——

"Don't go on, Sir!" cried Delvile, with mingled rage and horror, "I will not have her days limited! I sent not for you to give me such an account!"

And again he flew out of the house, leaving Dr

Lyster unaffectedly concerned for him, and too kind-hearted and too wise to be offended at the injustice of immoderate sorrow.

In a few minutes, however, from the effect rather of despair than philosophy, Delvile grew more composed, and waited upon Dr Lyster to apologize for his behaviour. He received his hearty forgiveness, and prevailed upon him to continue in town till the whole was decided.

About noon, Cecilia, from the wildest rambling and most perpetual agitation, sunk suddenly into a state of such utter insensibility, that she appeared unconscious even of her existence; and but that she breathed, she might already have passed for being dead.

When Delvile heard this, he could no longer endure even his post upon the stairs; he spent his whole time in wandering about the streets, or stopping in Dr Lyster's parlour to enquire if all was over.

That humane physician, not more alarmed at the danger of Cecilia, than grieved at the situation of Delvile, thought the present fearful crisis at least offered an opportunity of reconciling him with his father. He waited, therefore, upon that gentleman in St James's-square, and openly informed him of the dangerous state of Cecilia, and the misery of his son.

Mr Delvile, though he would gladly, to have annulled an alliance he held disgraceful to his family, have received intelligence that Cecilia was no more, was yet extremely disconcerted to hear of sufferings to which his own refusal of an asylum he was conscious had largely contributed; and after a haughty struggle between tenderness and wrath, he begged the advice of Dr Lyster how his son might be drawn from such a scene.

Dr Lyster, who well knew Delvile was too desperate to be tractable, proposed surprising him into an inter-

view by their returning together: Mr Delvile, however apprehensive and relenting, conceded most unwillingly to a measure he held beneath him, and, when he came to the shop, could scarce be persuaded to enter it. Mortimer, at that time, was taking a solitary ramble; and Dr Lyster, to complete the work he had begun of subduing the hard pride of his father, contrived, under pretence of waiting for him, to conduct him to the room of the invalide.

Mr Delvile, who knew not whither he was going, at first sight of the bed and the attendants, was hastily retreating; but the changed and livid face of Cecilia caught his eye, and, struck with sudden consternation, he involuntarily stopt.

"Look at the poor young lady!" cried Dr Lyster; "can you wonder a sight such as this should make Mr Mortimer forget every thing else?"

She was wholly insensible, but perfectly quiet; she seemed to distinguish nothing, and neither spoke nor moved.

Mr Delvile regarded her with the utmost horror: the refuge he so implacably refused her on the night when her intellects were disordered, he would now gladly have offered at the expence of almost similar sufferings, to have relieved himself from those rising pangs which called him author of this scene of woe. His pride, his pomp, his ancient name, were now sunk in his estimation; and while he considered himself the destroyer of this unhappy young creature, he would have sacrificed them all to have called himself her protector. Little is the boast of insolence when it is analysed by the conscience! bitter is the agony of self-reproach, where misery follows hardness of heart! yet, when the first painful astonishment from her situation abated, the remorse she excited being far stronger than the pity, he gave an angry glance at Dr Lyster for

betraying him into such a sight, and hastily left the room.

Delvile, who was now impatiently waiting to see Dr Lyster in the little parlour, alarmed at the sound of a new step upon the stairs, came out to enquire who had been admitted. When he saw his father, he shrunk back; but Mr Delvile, no longer supported by pride, and unable to recover from the shock he had just received, caught him in his arms, and said "Oh come home to me, my son! this is a place to destroy you!"

"Ah, Sir," cried Delvile, "think not of me now! —you must shew me no kindness; I am not in a state to bear it!" And, forcibly breaking from him, he hurried out of the house.

Mr Delvile, all the father awakened in his bosom, saw his departure with more dread than anger; and returned himself to St James's-square, tortured with parental fears, and stung by personal remorse, lamenting his own inflexibility, and pursued by the pale image of Cecilia.

She was still in this unconscious state, and apparently as free from suffering as from enjoyment, when a new voice was suddenly heard without, exclaiming, "Oh where is she? where is she? where is my dear Miss Beverley?" and Henrietta Belfield ran wildly into the room.

The advertisement in the news-papers had at once brought her to town, and directed her to the house: the mention that the lost lady *talked much of a person by the name of Delvile*, struck her instantly to mean Cecilia; the description corresponded with this idea, and the account of the dress confirmed it: Mr Arnott, equally terrified with herself, had therefore lent her his chaise to learn the truth of this conjecture, and she had travelled all night.

Flying up to the bedside, "Who is this?" she cried, "this is not Miss Beverley?" and then screaming with unrestrained horror, "Oh mercy! mercy!" she called out, "yes, it is indeed! and nobody would know her!—her own mother would not think her her child!"

"You must come away, Miss Belfield," said Mary, "you must indeed,—the doctors all say my lady must not be disturbed."

"Who shall take me away?" cried she, *angrily*, "nobody Mary! not all the doctors in the world! Oh sweet Miss Beverley! I will lie down by your side,—I will never quit you while you live,—and I wish, I wish I could die to save your precious life!"

Then, leaning over her, and wringing her hands, "Oh I shall break my heart," she cried, "to see her in this condition! Is this the so happy Miss Beverley, that I thought every body born to give joy to? the *Miss Beverley that seemed queen of the whole world!* yet so good and so gentle, so kind to the meanest person! excusing *every* body's *faults* but her own, and telling them how they might mend, and trying to make them as good as herself!—Oh who would know her! who would know her! what have they done to you, my beloved Miss Beverley? how have they altered and disfigured you in this wicked and barbarous manner?"

In the midst of this simple yet pathetic testimony, to the worth and various excellencies of Cecilia, Dr Lyster came into the room. The women all flocked *around him, except Mary, to vindicate themselves from* any share in permitting this new comer's entrance and behaviour; but Mary only told him who she was, and said, that if her lady was well enough to know her, there was nobody she was certain she would have been so glad to see.

"Young lady," said the doctor, "I would advise

you to walk into another room till you are a little more composed."

"Every body, I find, is for hurrying me away," cried the sobbing Henrietta, whose honest heart swelled with its own affectionate integrity; "but they might all save themselves the trouble, for go I will not!"

"This is very wrong," said the doctor, "and must not be suffered: do you call it friendship to come about a sick person in this manner?"

"Oh my Miss Beverley!" cried Henrietta, "do you hear how they all upbraid me? how they all want to force me away from you, and to hinder me even from looking at you! Speak for me, sweet lady! speak for me yourself! tell them the poor Henrietta will not do you any harm; tell them she only wishes just to sit by you, and to see you!——I will hold by this dear hand,—I will cling to it till the last minute; and you will not, I know you will not, give orders to have it taken away from me!"

Dr Lyster, though his own good nature was much affected by this fond sorrow, now half angrily represented to her the impropriety of indulging it: but Henrietta, unused to disguise or repress her feelings, grew only the more violent, the more she was convinced of Cecilia's danger: "Oh look but at her," she exclaimed, "and take me from her if you can! see how her sweet eyes are fixed! look but what a change in her complexion!—She does not see me, she does not know me,—she does not hear me! her hand seems quite lifeless already, her face is all fallen away!—Oh that I had died twenty deaths before I had lived to see this sight!—poor wretched Henrietta, thou hast now no friend left in the world! thou mayst go and lie down in some corner, and no one will come and say to thee a word of comfort!"

"This must not be!" said Dr Lyster, "you must take her away."

"You shall not!" cried she, desperately, "I will stay with her till she has breathed her last, and I will stay with her still longer! and if she was to speak to you at this moment, she would tell you that she chose it. She loved the poor Henrietta, and loved to have her near her; and when she was ill, and in much distress, she never once bid me leave her room. Is it not true, my sweet Miss Beverley? do you not know it to be true? Oh look not so dreadfully! turn to your unhappy Henrietta; sweetest, best of ladies! will you not speak to her once more? will you not say to her one single word?"

Dr Lyster now grew very angry, and telling her such violence might have fatal consequences, frightened her into more order, and drew her away himself. He had then the kindness to go with her into another room, where, when her first vehemence was spent, his remonstrances and reasoning brought her to a sense of the danger she might occasion, and made her promise not to return to the room till she had gained strength to behave better.

When Dr Lyster went again to Delvile, he found him greatly alarmed by his long stay; he communicated to him briefly what had passed, and counselled him to avoid encreasing his own grief by the sight of what was suffered by this unguarded and ardent girl. Delvile readily assented, for the weight of his own woe was too heavy to bear any addition.

Henrietta now, kept in order by Dr Lyster, contented herself with only sitting on the bed, without attempting to speak, and with no other employment than alternately looking at her sick friend, and covering her streaming eyes with her handkerchief; from time to time quitting the room wholly, for the relief of sobbing at liberty and aloud in another.

But, in the evening, while Delvile and Dr Lyster were taking one of their melancholy rambles, a new scene was acted in the apartment of the still senseless Cecilia. Albany suddenly made his entrance into it, accompanied by three children, two girls and one boy, from the ages of four to six, neatly dressed, clean, and healthy.

"See here!" cried he, as he came in, "see here what I've brought you! raise, raise your languid head, and look this way! you think me rigid,—an enemy to pleasure, austere, harsh, and a forbidder of joy: look at this sight, and see the contrary! who shall bring you comfort, joy, pleasure, like this? three innocent children, clothed and fed by your bounty!"

Henrietta and Mary, who both knew him well, were but little surprised at anything he said or did, and the nurses presumed not to interfere but by whispers.

Cecilia, however, observed nothing that passed; and Albany, somewhat astonished, approached nearer to the bed; "Wilt thou not speak?" he cried.

"She can't, Sir," said one of the women; "she has been speechless many hours."

The air of triumph with which he had entered the room was now changed into disappointment and consternation. For some minutes he thoughtfully and sorrowfully contemplated her, and then, with a deep sigh, said, "How will the poor rue this day!"

Then, turning to the children, who, awed by this scene, were quiet from terror. "Alas!" he said, "ye helpless babes, ye know not what you have lost: presumptuously we came; unheeded we must return! I brought you to be seen by your benefactress, but she is going where she will find many such."

He then led them away; but, suddenly coming back, "I may see her, perhaps, no more! shall I not, then, pray for her? Great and aweful is the change she is

making; what are human revolutions, how pitiful, how insignificant, compared with it!—Come, little babies, come; with gifts has she often blessed *you*, with wishes bless *her!* Come, let us kneel round her bed; let us *all pray for her together; lift up your innocent hands*, and for all of you I will speak."

He then made the children obey his injunctions, and having knelt himself, while Henrietta and Mary instantly did the same, "Sweet flower!" he cried, "untimely *cropt in years, yet in excellence mature! early decayed* in misery, yet fragrant in innocence! Gentle be thy exit, for unsullied have been thy days; brief be thy pains, for few have been thy offences! Look at her sweet babes, and bear her in your remembrance; often *will I visit you and revive the solemn scene. Look at* her ye, also, who are nearer to your end—Ah! will you bear it like her!"

He paused; and the nurses and Mrs Wyers, struck by this call, and moved by the general example, crept to the bed, and dropt on their knees, almost involuntarily.

"She departs," resumed Albany, "the envy of the world! while yet no guilt had seized her soul, and no remorse had marred her peace. She was the handmaid of charity, and pity dwelt in her bosom! her mouth was never open but to give comfort; her footsteps were followed by blessings! Oh happy in purity, be thine the song of triumph!—softly shalt thou sink to temporary sleep,—sublimely shalt thou rise to life that wakes for ever!"

He then got up, took the children by their little hands, and went away.

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Chapter x.

A TERMINATION.

DR LYSTER and Delvile met them at the entrance into the house. Extremely alarmed lest Cecilia had received any disturbance, they both hastened up stairs, but Delvile proceeded only to the door. He stopt there and listened; but all was silent: the prayers of Albany had struck an awe into every one; and Dr Lyster soon returned to tell him there was no alteration in his patient.

"And he has not disturbed her?" cried Delvile.

"No, not at all."

"I think, then," said he, advancing, though trembling, "I will yet see her once more."

"No, no, Mr Mortimer," cried the doctor, "why should you give yourself so unnecessary a shock?"

"The shock," answered he, "is over!—tell me, however, is there any chance I may hurt *her?*"

"I believe not; I do not think, just now, she will perceive you."

"Well, then,—I may grieve, perhaps, hereafter, that once more—that one glance!"—He stopt, irresolute: the doctor would again have dissuaded him, but, after a little hesitation, he assured him he was prepared for the worst, and forced himself into the room.

When again, however, he beheld Cecilia,—senseless, speechless, motionless, her features void of all expression; her cheeks without colour, her eyes without meaning,—he shrunk from the sight, he leant upon Dr Lyster, and almost groaned aloud.

The doctor would have conducted him out of the apartment; but, recovering from this first agony, he turned again to view her, and casting up his eyes, fervently ejaculated, "Oh merciful powers! Take, or

destroy her! let her not linger thus, rather let me lose her for ever!—O far rather would I see her dead, than in this dreadful condition!"

Then, advancing to the bed side, and yet more earnestly looking at her, "I pray not now," he cried, "for thy life! inhumanly as I have treated thee, I am not yet so hardened as to wish thy misery lengthened: no; quick be thy restoration, or short as pure thy passage to eternity!—Oh my Cecilia! lovely, however altered! sweet even in the arms of death and insanity! and dearer to my tortured heart in this calamitous state, than in all thy pride of health and beauty!"——

He stopt, and turned from her, yet could not tear himself away; he came back, he again looked at her, he hung over her in anguish unutterable; he kissed each burning hand, he folded to his bosom her feeble form, and, recovering his speech, though almost bursting with sorrow, faintly articulated, "Is all over? no ray of reason left? no knowledge of thy wretched Delvile?—no, none! the hand of death is on her, and she is utterly gone!—sweet suffering excellence! loved, lost, expiring Cecilia!—but I will not repine! peace and kindred angels are watching to receive thee, and if thou art parted from thyself, it were impious to lament thou shouldst be parted from me.—Yet in thy tomb will be deposited all that to me could render existence supportable, every frail chance of happiness, every sustaining hope, and all alleviation of sorrow!——"

Dr Lyster now again approaching, thought he perceived some change in his patient, and peremptorily forced him away from her: then returning himself, he found that her eyes were shut, and she was dropt asleep.

This was an omen the most favourable he could hope. He now seated himself by the bedside, and de-

termined not to quit her till the expected crisis was past. He gave the strictest orders for the whole house to be kept quiet, and suffered no one in the room either to speak or move.

Her sleep was long and heavy; yet, when she awoke, her sensibility was evidently returned. She started, suddenly raised her head from the pillow, looked round her, and called out, "where am I now?"

"Thank Heaven!" cried Henrietta, and was rushing forward, when Dr Lyster, by a stern and angry look, compelled her again to take her seat.

He then spoke to her himself, enquired how she did, and found her quite rational.

Henrietta, who now doubted not her perfect recovery, wept as violently for joy as she had before wept for grief; and Mary, in the same belief, ran instantly to Delvile, eager to carry to him the first tidings that her mistress had recovered her reason.

Delvile, in the utmost emotion, then returned to the chamber; but stood at some distance from the bed, waiting Dr Lyster's permission to approach it.

Cecilia was quiet and composed, her recollection seemed restored, and her intellects sound: but she was faint and weak, and contentedly silent, to avoid the effort of speaking.

Dr Lyster encouraged this stillness, and suffered not anyone, not even Delvile, to advance to her. After a short time, however, she again, and very calmly, began to talk to him. She now first knew him, and seemed much surprised by his attendance. She could not tell, she said, what of late had happened to her, nor could guess where she was, or by what means she came into such a place. Dr Lyster desired her at present not to think upon the subject, and promised her a full account of everything, when she was stronger, and more fit for conversing.

This for a while silenced her. But, after a short pause, "Tell me," she said, "Dr Lyster, have I no friend in this place but you?"

"Yes, yes, you have several friends here," answered the Doctor, "only I keep them in order, lest they should hurry or disturb you."

She seemed much pleased by this speech; but soon after said, "You must not, Doctor, keep them in order much longer, for the sight of them, I think, would much revive me."

"Ah, Miss Beverley!" cried Henrietta, who could not now restrain herself, "may not *I*, among the rest, come and speak to you?"

"Who is that?" said Cecilia, in a voice of pleasure, though very feeble; "is it my ever-dear Henrietta?"

"Oh this is joy indeed!" cried she, fervently kissing her cheeks and forehead, "joy that I never, never expected to have more!"

"Come, come," cried Dr Lyster, "here's enough of this; did I not do well to keep such people off?"

"I believe you did," said Cecilia, faintly smiling; "my too kind Henrietta, you must be more tranquil!"

"I will, I will indeed, madam!—my dear, dear Miss Beverley, I will indeed!—now once you have owned me, and once again I hear your sweet voice, I will do any thing, and every thing, for I am made happy for my whole life!"

"Ah, sweet Henrietta!" cried Cecilia, giving her her hand, "you must suppress these feelings, or our Doctor here will soon part us. But tell me, Doctor, is there no one else that you can let me see?"

Delvile, who had listened to this scene in the unspeakable perturbation of that hope which is kindled from the very ashes of despair, was now springing forward; but Dr Lyster, fearful of the consequences, hastily arose, and with a look and air not to be disputed,

took hold of his arm, and led him out of the room. He then represented to him strongly the danger of agitating or disturbing her, and charged him to keep from her sight till better able to bear it; assuring him at the same time that he might now reasonably hope her recovery.

Delvile, lost in transport, could make no answer, but flew into his arms, and almost madly embraced him; he then hastened out of sight to pour forth fervent thanks, and hurrying back with equal speed, again embraced the Doctor, and while his manly cheeks were burnt with tears of joy, he could not yet articulate the glad tumult of his soul.

The worthy Dr Lyster, who heartily partook of his happiness, again urged him to be discreet; and Delvile, no longer intractable and desperate, gratefully concurred in whatever he commanded. Dr Lyster then returned to Cecilia, and to relieve her mind from any uneasy suspense, talked to her openly of Delvile, gave her to understand he was acquainted with her marriage, and told her he had prohibited their meeting till each was better able to support it.

Cecilia by this delay seemed half gratified, and half disappointed; but the rest of the physicians, who had been summoned upon this happy change, now appearing, the orders were yet more strictly enforced for keeping her quiet.

She submitted, therefore, peaceably; and Delvile, whose gladdened heart still throbbed with speechless rapture, contentedly watched at her chamber door, and obeyed implicitly whatever was said to him.

She now visibly, and almost hourly grew better; and, in a short time, her anxiety to know all that was passed, and by what means she became so ill, and confined in a house of which she had not any knowledge, obliged Dr Lyster to make himself master of these particulars, that

he might communicate them to her with a calmness that Delvile could not attain.

Delvile himself, happy to be spared the bitter task of such a relation, informed him all he knew of the story, and then entreated him to narrate to her also the motives of his own strange, and he feared unpardonable conduct, and the scenes which had followed their parting.

He came, he said, to England, ignorant of all that had past in his absence, intending merely to wait upon his father, and communicate his marriage, before he gave directions to his lawyer for the settlements and preparations which were to precede its further publication. He meant, also, to satisfy himself, of the real situation of Mr Monckton, and then, after an interview with Cecilia, to have returned to his mother, and waited at Nice till he might publicly claim his wife.

To this purpose he had written in his letter, which he meant to have put in the Post-office in London himself; and he had but just alighted from his chaise, when he met Ralph, Cecilia's servant, in the street.

Hastily stopping him, he enquired if he had left his place? "No," answered Ralph, "I am only come up to town with my lady."

"With your lady?" cried the astonished Delvile, "is your lady then in town?"

"Yes, sir, she is at Mrs Belfield's."

"At Mrs Belfield's?—is her daughter returned home?"

"No, sir, we left her in the country."

He was then going on with a further account, but, in too much confusion of mind to hear him, Delvile abruptly wished him good night, and marched on himself towards Befield's.

The pleasure with which he would have heard that Cecilia was so near to him, was totally lost in his perplexity to account for her journey. Her letters had

never hinted at such a purpose,—the news reached him only by accident,—it was ten o'clock at night,—yet she was at Belfield's—though the sister was away,—though the mother was professedly odious to her!——In an instant, all he had formerly heard, all he had formerly disregarded, rushed suddenly upon his memory, and he began to believe he had been deluded, that his father was right, and that Belfield had some strange and improper influence over her heart.

The suspicion was death to him; he drove it from him, he concluded the whole was some error: his reason as powerfully as his tenderness vindicated her innocence; and though he arrived at the house in much disorder, he yet arrived with a firm persuasion of an honourable explanation.

The door was open,—a chaise was at it in waiting, —Mrs Belfield was listening in the passage; these appearances were strange, and encreased his agitation. He asked for her son in a voice scarce audible,—she told him he was engaged with a lady, and must not be disturbed.

That fatal answer, at a moment so big with the most horrible surmises, was decisive: furiously, therefore, he forced himself past her, and opened the door:—but when he saw them together,—the rest of the family confessedly excluded, his rage turned to horror, and he could hardly support himself.

"O Dr Lyster!" he continued, "ask of the sweet creature if these circumstances offer any extenuation for the fatal jealousy which seized me? never by myself while I live will it be forgiven, but she, perhaps, who is all softness, all compassion, and all peace, may some time hence think my sufferings almost equal to my offence."

He then proceeded in his narration.

When he had so peremptorily ordered her chaise to

St James's-square, he went back to the house, and desired Belfield to walk out with him. He complied, and they were both silent till they came to a Coffee-house, where they asked for a private room. The whole way they went, his heart, secretly satisfied of the purity of Cecilia, smote him for the situation in which he had left her; yet, having unfortunately gone so far as to make his suspicions apparent, he thought it necessary to his character that their abolition should be equally public.

When they were alone, "Belfield," he said, "to obviate any imputation of impertinence in my enquiries, I deny not, what I presume you have been told by herself, that I have the nearest interest in whatever concerns the lady from whom we are just now parted: I must beg, therefore, an explicit account of the purpose of your private conversation with her."

"Mr Delvile," answered Belfield, with mingled candour and spirit, "I am not commonly much disposed to answer enquiries thus cavalierly put to me; yet here, as I find myself not the principal person concerned, I think I am bound in justice to speak for the absent who is. I assure you, therefore, most solemnly, that your interest in Miss Beverley I never heard but by common report, that our being alone together was by both of us undesigned and undesired, that the honour she did our house in calling at it, was merely to acquaint my mother with my sister's removal to Mrs Harrel's, and that the part which I had myself in her condescension, was simply to be consulted upon a journey which she has in contemplation to the South of France. And now, sir, having given you this peaceable satisfaction, you will find me extremely at your service to offer any other."

Delvile instantly held out his hand to him; "What you assert," he said, "upon your honour, requires no

other testimony. Your gallantry and your probity are equally well known to me; with either, therefore, I am content, and by no means require the intervention of both."

They then parted; and now, his doubts removed, and his punctilio satisfied, he flew to St James's-square, to entreat the forgiveness of Cecilia for the alarm he had occasioned her, and to hear the reason of her sudden journey, and change of measures. But when he came there, to find that his father, whom he had concluded was at Delvile Castle, was in the house, while Cecilia had not even enquired for him at the door,—"Oh let me not," he continued, "even to myself, let me not trace the agony of that moment!—where to seek her I knew not, why she was in London I could not divine, for what purpose she had given the postilion a new direction I could form no idea. Yet it appeared that she wished to avoid me, and once more, in the frenzy of my disappointment, I supposed Belfield a party in her concealment. Again, therefore, I sought him,—at his own house,—at the coffee-house where I had left him,—in vain, wherever I came, I just missed him, for, hearing of my search, he went with equal restlessness, from place to place to meet me. I rejoice we both failed; a repetition of my enquiries in my then irritable state, must inevitably have provoked the most fatal resentment.

"I will not dwell upon the scenes that followed,—my laborious search, my fruitless wanderings, the distraction of my suspense, the excess of my despair!——even Belfield, the fiery Belfield, when I met with him the next day, was so much touched by my wretchedness, that he bore with all my injustice; feeling, noble young man! never will I lose the remembrance of his high-souled patience.

"And now, Dr Lyster, go to my Cecilia; tell her

this tale, and try, for you have *skill sufficient, to soften*, yet not wound her with my sufferings. If then she can bear to see me, to bless me with the sound of her sweet voice, no longer at war with her intellects, to hold out to me her loved hand, in token of peace and forgiveness.——Oh, Dr Lyster! preserver of *my* life in hers! give to me but that exquisite moment, and every past evil will be for ever obliterated!"

"You must be calmer, Sir," said the Doctor, "before I make the attempt. These heroicks are mighty well for sound health, and strong nerves, but they will not do for an invalide."

He went, however, to Cecilia, and gave her this narration, suppressing whatever he feared would most affect her, and judiciously enlivening the whole by his strictures. Cecilia was much easier for this removal of her perplexities, and, as her anguish and her terror had *been unmixed with resentment, she had now no desire* but to reconcile Delvile with himself.

Dr Lyster, however, by his friendly authority, obliged her for some time to be content with this relation; but when she grew better, her impatience became stronger, and he feared opposition would be as hurtful as compliance.

Delvile, therefore, was now admitted; yet slowly and with trepidation he advanced, terrified for her, and fearful of himself, filled with remorse for the injuries she had sustained, and impressed with grief and horror to behold her so ill and altered.

Supported by pillows, she sat almost upright. The moment she saw him, she attempted to bend forward and welcome him, calling out in a tone of pleasure, though faintly, "Ah! dearest Delvile! is it you?" but too weak for the effort she had made, she sunk back upon her pillow, pale, trembling, and disordered.

Dr Lyster would then have interfered to postpone

their further conversation; but Delvile was no longer master of himself or his passions: he darted forward, and kneeling at the bed side, "Sweet injured excellence!" he cried, "wife of my heart! sole object of my chosen affection! dost thou yet live? do I hear thy loved voice?—do I see thee again?—art thou my Cecilia? and have I indeed not lost thee?" then regarding her more fixedly, "Alas," he cried, "art thou indeed my Cecilia! so pale, so emaciated!—Oh suffering angel! and couldst thou then call upon Delvile, the guilty, but heart-broken Delvile, thy destroyer, thy murderer, and yet not call to execrate him?"

Cecilia, extremely affected, could not utter a word; she held out to him her hand, she looked at him with gentleness and kindness, but tears started into her eyes, and trickled in large drops down her colourless cheeks.

"Angelic creature!" cried Delvile, his own tears overflowing, while he pressed to his lips the kind token of her pardon, "can you give to me again a hand so ill deserved? can you look with such compassion on the author of your woes? on the wretch, who for an instant could doubt the purity of a mind so seraphic!"

"Ah, Delvile!" cried she, a little reviving, "think no more of what is past!—to see you,—to be yours,—drives all evil from my remembrance!"

"I am not worthy this joy!" cried he, rising, kneeling, and rising again; "I know not how to sustain it! a forgiveness such as this,—when I believed you must hate me for ever! when repulse and aversion were all I dared expect,—when my own inhumanity had bereft thee of thy reason,—when the grave, the pitiless grave, was already open to receive thee."—

"Too kind, too feeling Delvile!" cried the penetrated Cecilia, "relieve your loaded heart from these bitter recollections; mine is lightened already,—lightened, I think, of every thing but its affection for *you!*"

"Oh words of transport and extacy!" cried the enraptured Delvile, "oh partner of my life! friend, solace, darling of my bosom! that so lately I thought expiring! that I folded to my bleeding heart in the *agony of eternal separation!*"—

"Come away, Sir, come away," cried Dr Lyster, who now saw that Cecilia was greatly agitated, "I will not be answerable for the continuation of this scene;" and taking him by the arm, he awakened him from his frantic rapture, by assuring him she would faint, and forced him away from her.

Soon after he was gone, and Cecilia became more tranquil, Henrietta, who had wept with bitterness in a corner of the room during this scene, approached her, and, with an attempted smile, though in a voice hardly audible, said, "Ah, Miss Beverley, you will, at last, then be happy! happy as all your goodness deserves. And I am sure I should rejoice in it if I was to die to make you happier!"

Cecilia, who but too well knew her full meaning, tenderly embraced her, but was prevented by Dr Lyster from entering into any discourse with her.

The first meeting, however, with Delvile being over, the second was far more quiet, and in a very short time, he would scarcely quit her a moment, Cecilia herself receiving from his sight a pleasure too great for denial, yet too serene for danger.

The worthy Dr Lyster, finding her prospect of recovery thus fair, prepared for leaving London: but, equally desirous to do good out of his profession as in it, he first, at the request of Delvile, waited upon his father, to acquaint him with his present situation, solicit his directions for his future proceedings, and endeavour to negociate a general reconciliation.

Mr Delvile, to whose proud heart social joy could find no avenue, was yet touched most sensibly by the

restoration of Cecilia. Neither his dignity nor his displeasure had been able to repress remorse, a feeling to which, with all his foibles, he had not been accustomed. The view of her distraction had dwelt upon his imagination, the despondency of his son had struck him with fear and horror. He had been haunted by self reproach, and pursued by vain regret; and those concessions he had refused to tenderness and entreaty, he now willingly accorded to change repentance for tranquility. He sent instantly for his son, whom even with tears he embraced, and felt his own peace restored as he pronounced his forgiveness.

New, however, to kindness, he retained it not long, and a stranger to generosity, he knew not how to make her welcome: the extinction of his remorse abated his compassion for Cecilia, and when solicited to receive her, he revived the charges of Mr Monckton.

Cecilia, informed of this, determined to write to that gentleman herself, whose long and painful illness, joined to his irrecoverable loss of her, she now hoped might prevail with him to make reparation for the injuries he had done her.

To Mr Monckton.

I write not, Sir, to upbraid you; the woes which have followed your ill offices, and which you may some time hear, will render my reproaches superfluous. I write but to beseech that what is past may content you; and that, however, while I was single, you chose to misrepresent me to the Delvile family, you will have so much honour, since I am now become one of it, as to acknowledge my innocence of the crimes laid to my charge.

In remembrance of my former long friendship, I send you my good wishes; and in consideration of my hopes

from your recantation, I send you, Sir, if you think it worth acceptance, my forgiveness.

CECILIA DELVILE.

Mr Monckton, after many long and painful struggles between useless rage, and involuntary remorse, at length sent the following answer.

To Mrs Mortimer Delvile.

Those who could ever believe you guilty, must have been eager to think you so. I meant but your welfare at all times, and to have saved you from a connection I never thought equal to your merit. I am grieved, but not surprised, to hear of your injuries; from the alliance you have formed, nothing else could be expected: if my testimony to your innocence can, however, serve to mitigate them, I scruple not to declare I believe it without taint.

Delvile sent by Dr Lyster this letter to his father, whose rage at the detection of the perfidy which had deceived him, was yet inferior to what he felt that his family was mentioned so injuriously.

His conference with Dr Lyster was long and painful, but decisive: that sagacious and friendly man knew well how to work upon his passions, and so effectually awakened them by representing the disgrace of his own family from the present situation of Cecilia, that before he quitted his house he was authorised to invite her to remove to it.

When he returned from his embassy, he found Delvile in her room, and each waiting with impatience the event of his negociation.

The Doctor with much alacrity gave Cecilia the invitation with which he had been charged; but Delvile,

jealous for her dignity, was angry and dissatisfied his father brought it not himself, and exclaimed with much mortification, "Is this all the grace accorded me?"

"Patience, patience, Sir," answered the Doctor; "when you have thwarted any body in their first hope and ambition, do you expect they will send you their compliments and many thanks for the disappointment? Pray let the good gentleman have his way in some little matters, since you have taken such effectual care to put out of his reach the power of having it in greater."

"O far from starting obstacles," cried Cecilia, "let us solicit a reconciliation with whatever concessions he may require. The misery of DISOBEDIENCE we have but too fatally experienced; and thinking as we think of filial ties and parental claims, how can we ever hope happiness till forgiven and taken into favour?"

"True, my Cecilia," answered Delvile, "and generous and condescending as true; and if *you* can thus sweetly comply, I will gratefully forbear making any opposition. Too much already have you suffered from the impetuosity of my temper, but I will try to curb it in future by the remembrance of your injuries."

"The whole of this unfortunate business," said Dr Lyster, "has been the result of PRIDE and PREJUDICE. Your uncle, the Dean, began it, by his arbitrary will, as if an ordinance of his own could arrest the course of nature! and as if *he* had power to keep alive, by the loan of a name, a family in the male branch already extinct. Your father, Mr Mortimer, continued it with the same self-partiality, preferring the wretched gratification of tickling his ear with a favourite sound, to the solid happiness of his son with a rich and deserving wife. Yet this, however, remember; if to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you owe your miseries, so wonderfully is good and evil balanced, that to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you will also owe their

termination: for all that I could say to Mr Delvile, either of reasoning or entreaty,—and I said all I could suggest, and I suggested all a man need wish to hear,—was totally thrown away, till I pointed out to him his *own* disgrace, in having a *daughter-in-law* immured in these mean lodgings!

"Thus, my dear young lady, the terror which drove you to this house, and the sufferings which have confined you in it, will prove, in the event, the source of *your future peace: for when all my best rhetorick failed* to melt Mr Delvile, I instantly brought him to terms by coupling his name with a pawnbroker's! And he could not with more disgust hear his son called Mr Beverley, than think of his son's wife when he hears of the *Three Blue Balls!* Thus the same passions, taking but different directions, *do* mischief and *cure* it alternately.

"Such, my good young friends, is the MORAL of your calamities. You have all, in my opinion, been strangely at cross purposes, and trifled, no one knows why, with the first blessings of life. My only hope is *that now, having among you thrown away its luxuries,* you will have known enough of misery to be glad to keep its necessaries."

This excellent man was yet prevailed upon by Delvile to stay and assist in removing the feeble Cecilia to St James's-square.

Henrietta, for whom Mr Arnott's equipage and servants had still remained in town, was then, though with much difficulty, persuaded to go back to Suffolk: but Cecilia, however fond of her society, was too sensible of the danger and impropriety of her present situation, to receive from it any pleasure.

Mr Delvile's reception of Cecilia was formal and cold: yet, as she now appeared publicly in the character of his son's wife, the best apartment in his house

had been prepared for her use, his domestics were instructed to wait upon her with the utmost respect, and Lady Honoria Pemberton, who was accidentally in town, offered from curiosity, what Mr Delvile accepted from parade, to be herself in St James's-square, in order to do honour to his daughter-in-law's first entrance.

When Cecilia was a little recovered from the shock of the first interview, and the fatigue of her removal, the anxious Mortimer would instantly have had her conveyed to her own apartment; but, willing to exert herself, and hoping to oblige Mr Delvile, she declared she was well able to remain some time longer in the drawing-room.

"My good friends," said Dr Lyster, "in the course of my long practice, I have found it impossible to study the human frame, without a little studying the human mind; and from all that I have yet been able to make out, either by observation, reflection, or comparison, it appears to me at this moment, that Mr Mortimer Delvile has got the best wife, and that you, Sir, have here the most faultless daughter-in-law, that any husband or any father in the three kingdoms belonging to his Majesty can either have or desire."

Cecilia smiled; Mortimer looked his delighted concurrence; Mr Delvile forced himself to make a stiff inclination of the head; and Lady Honoria gaily exclaimed, "Dr Lyster, when you say the *best* and the most *faultless*, you should always add the rest of the company excepted."

"Upon my word," cried the Doctor, "I beg your ladyship's pardon; but there is a certain unguarded warmth comes across a man now and then, that drives *etiquette* out of his head, and makes him speak truth before he well knows where he is."

"O terrible!" cried she, "this is sinking deeper

and deeper. I had hoped the town air would have taught you better things; but I find you have visited at Delvile Castle till you are fit for no other place."

"Whoever, Lady Honoria," said Mr Delvile, much offended, "is fit for Delvile Castle, must be fit for *every* other place; though every other place may by no *means be fit for him.*"

"O yes, Sir," cried she, giddily, "every possible place will be fit for him, if he can once bear with that. Don't you think so, Dr Lyster?"

"Why, when a man has the honour to see your ladyship," answered he, good-humouredly, "he is apt to think too much of the person, to care about the place."

"Come, I begin to have some hopes of you," cried she, "for I see, for a Doctor, you have really a very pretty notion of a compliment: only you have one great fault still; you look the whole time as if you said it for a joke."

"Why, in fact, madam, when a man has been a plain dealer both in word and look for upwards of fifty years, 'tis expecting too quick a reformation to demand ductility of voice and eye from him at a blow. How*ever, give me but a little time and a little encourage*ment, and, with such a tutress, 'twill be hard if I do not, in a very few lessons, learn the right method of seasoning a simper, and the newest fashion of twisting words from meaning."

"But pray," cried she, "upon those occasions, always remember to look serious. Nothing sets off a compliment so much as a long face. If you are tempted to an unseasonable laugh, think of Delvile Castle; 'tis an expedient I commonly make use of myself when I am afraid of being *too frisky: and it always succeeds,* for the very recollection of it gives me the head-ache in a moment. Upon my word, Mr Delvile, you must

have the constitution of five men, to have kept such good health, after living so long at that horrible place. You can't imagine how you've surprised me, for I have regularly expected to hear of your death at the end of every summer: and, I assure you, once, I was very near buying mourning."

"The estate which descends to a man from his own ancestors, Lady Honoria," answered Mr Delvile, "will seldom be apt to injure his health, if he is conscious of committing no misdemeanour which has degraded their memory."

"How vastly odious this new father of yours is!" said Lady Honoria, in a whisper to Cecilia; "what could ever induce you to give up your charming estate for the sake of coming into this fusty old family! I would really advise you to have your marriage annulled. You have only, you know, to take an oath that you were forcibly run away with; and as you are an Heiress, and the Delviles are all so violent, it will easily be credited. And then, as soon as you are at liberty, I would advise you to marry my little Lord Derford."

"Would you only, then," said Cecilia, "have me regain my freedom in order to part with it?"

"Certainly," answered Lady Honoria, "for you can do nothing at all without being married; a single woman is a thousand times more shackled than a wife; for she is accountable to every body; and a wife, you know, has nothing to do but just to manage her husband."

"And that," said Cecilia, smiling, "you consider as a trifle?"

"Yes, if you do but marry a man you don't care for."

"You are right, then, indeed, to recommend to me my Lord Derford!"

"O yes, he will make the prettiest husband in the

world; you may fly about yourself as wild as a lark, and keep him the whole time as tame as a jack-daw: and though he may complain of you to your friends, he will never have the courage to find fault to your face. But as to Mortimer, you will not be able to govern him as long as you live; for the moment you have put him upon the fret, you'll fall into the dumps yourself, hold out your hand to him, and, losing the opportunity of gaining some material point, make up at the first soft word."

"You think, then, the quarrel more amusing than the reconciliation?"

"O, a thousand times! for while you are quarrelling, you may say any thing, and demand any thing, but when you are reconciled, you ought to behave pretty, and seem contented."

"Those who presume to have any pretensions to your ladyship," said Cecilia, "would be made happy indeed should they hear your principles!"

"O, it would not signify at all," answered she, "for one's fathers, and uncles, and those sort of people, always make connexions for one, and not a creature thinks of our principles, till they find them out by our conduct: and nobody can possibly do that till we are married, for they give us no power beforehand. The men know nothing of us in the world while we are single, but how we can dance a minuet, or play a lesson upon the harpsichord."

"And what else," said Mr Delvile, who advanced, and heard this last speech, "need a young lady of rank desire to be known for? your ladyship surely would not have her degrade herself by studying like an artist or professor?"

"O no, Sir, I would not have her study at all; it's mighty well for children, but really after sixteen, and when one is come out, one has quite fatigue enough in

dressing, and going to public places, and ordering new things, without all that torment of first and second position, and E upon the first line, and F upon the first space!"

"Your ladyship must, however, pardon me for hinting," said Mr Delvile, "that a young lady of condition, who has a proper sense of her dignity, cannot be seen too rarely, or known too little."

"O but I hate dignity!" cried she carelessly, "for it's the dullest thing in the world. I always thought it was owing to that you were so little amusing;—really I beg your pardon, Sir, I meant to say so little talkative."

"I can easily credit that your ladyship spoke hastily," answered he, highly piqued, "for I believe, indeed, a person of a family such as mine, will hardly be supposed to have come into the world for the office of amusing it!"

"O no, Sir," cried she, with pretended innocence, "nobody, I am sure, ever saw you with such a thought." Then, turning to Cecilia, she added in a whisper, "You cannot imagine, my dear Mrs Mortimer, how I detest this old cousin of mine! Now pray tell me honestly if you don't hate him yourself?"

"I hope," said Cecilia, "to have no reason."

"Lord, how you are always upon your guard! If I were half as cautious, I should die of the vapours in a month; the only thing that keeps me at all alive, is now and then making people angry; for the folks at our house let me go out so seldom, and then send me with such stupid old chaperons, that giving them a little torment is really the only entertainment I can procure myself. O—but I had almost forgot to tell you a most delightful thing!"

"What is it?"

"Why you must know I have the greatest hopes in

the world that my father will quarrel with old Mr Delvile!"

"And is that such a delightful thing!"

"O yes; I have lived upon the very idea this fortnight; for then, you know, they'll both be in a passion, and I shall see which of them looks frightfullest."

"When Lady Honoria whispers," cried Mortimer, "I always suspect some mischief."

"No indeed," answered her ladyship, "I was merely congratulating Mrs Mortimer about her marriage. Though really, upon second thoughts, I don't know whether I should not rather condole with her, for I have long been convinced she has a prodigious antipathy to you. I saw it the whole time I was at Delvile Castle, where she used to change colour at the very sound of your name; a symptom I never perceived when I talked to her of my Lord Derford, who would certainly have made her a thousand times a better husband."

"If you mean on account of his title, Lady Honoria," said Mr Delvile: "your ladyship must be strangely forgetful of the connections of your family, not to remember that Mortimer, after the death of his uncle and myself, must inevitably inherit one far more honourable than a new-sprung-up family, like my Lord Ernolf's, could offer."

"Yes, Sir; but then, you know, she would have kept her estate, which would have been a vastly better thing than an old pedigree of new relations. Besides, I don't find that any body cares for the noble blood of the Delviles but themselves; and if she had kept her fortune, every body, I fancy, would have cared for *that*."

"Every body, then," said Mr Delvile, "must be highly mercenary and ignoble, or the blood of an ancient and honourable house, would be thought contaminated by the most distant hint of so degrading a comparison."

"Dear Sir, what should we all do with birth if it was not for wealth? it would neither take us to Ranelagh nor the Opera; nor buy us caps nor wigs, nor supply us with dinners nor bouquets."

"Caps and wigs, dinners and bouquets!" interrupted Mr Delvile; "your ladyship's estimate of wealth is really extremely minute."

"Why, you know, Sir, as to caps and wigs, they are very serious things, for we should look mighty droll figures to go about bare-headed; and as to dinners, how would the Delviles have lasted all these thousand centuries if they had disdained eating them?"

"Whatever may be your ladyship's satisfaction," said Mr Delvile, angrily, "in depreciating a house that has the honour of being nearly allied with your own, you will not, I hope at least, instruct this lady," turning to Cecilia, "to adopt a similar contempt of its antiquity and dignity."

"This lady," cried Mortimer, "will at least, by condescending to become one of it, secure us from any danger that such contempt may spread further."

"Let me but," said Cecilia, looking gratefully at him, "be as secure from exciting as I am from feeling contempt, and what can I have to wish?"

"Good and excellent young lady!" said Dr Lyster, "the first of blessings indeed is yours in the temperance of your own mind. When you began your career in life, you appeared to us short-sighted mortals, to possess more than your share of the good things of this world; such a union of riches, beauty, independence, talents, education and virtue, seemed a monopoly to raise general envy and discontent; but mark with what scrupulous exactness the good and bad is ever balanced! You have had a thousand sorrows to which those who have looked up to you have been strangers, and for which not all the advantages you possess have been equivalent.

There is evidently throughout this world, in things as well as persons, a levelling principle, at war with pre-eminence, and destructive of perfection."

"Ah!" cried Mortimer, in a low voice to Cecilia, "*how much higher must we all rise, or how much* lower must you fall, ere any levelling principle will approximate us with YOU!"

He then entreated her to spare her strength and spirits by returning to her own apartment, and the con*versation was broken up.*

"Pray permit me, Mrs Mortimer," cried Lady Honoria, in taking leave, "to beg that the first guest you invite to Delvile Castle may be me. You know my partiality to it already. I shall be particularly happy in *waiting upon you in tempestuous weather!* We can all stroll out together, you know, very sociably; and I sha'n't be much in your way, for if there should happen to be a storm, you can easily lodge me under some great tree, and while you amuse yourselves with a *tête-à-tête*, give me the indulgence of my own reflections. I am vastly fond of thinking, and being alone, you know,—especially in thunder and lightning!"

She then ran away; and they all separated: Cecilia *was conveyed up stairs, and the worthy Dr Lyster,* loaded with acknowledgments of every kind, set out for the country.

Cecilia, still weak, and much emaciated, for some time lived almost wholly in her own room, where *the grateful and solicitous attendance of Mortimer,* alleviated the pain both of her illness and confinement: but as soon as her health permitted travelling, he hastened with her abroad.

Here tranquility once more made its abode the heart *of Cecilia; that heart so long torn with anguish, sus*pense and horror! Mrs Delvile received her with the most rapturous fondness, and the impression of her

sorrows gradually wore away, from her kind and maternal cares, and from the watchful affection and delighted tenderness of her son.

The Egglestons now took entire possession of her estate, and Delvile, at her entreaty, forbore shewing any personal resentment of their conduct, and put into the hands of a lawyer the arrangement of the affair.

They continued abroad some months, and the health of Mrs Delvile was tolerably re-established. They were then summoned home by the death of Lord Delvile, who bequeathed to his nephew Mortimer his town house, and whatever of his estate was not annexed to his title, which necessarily devolved to his brother.

The sister of Mrs Delvile, a woman of high spirit and strong passions, lived not long after him; but having, in her latter days, intimately connected herself with Cecilia, she was so much charmed with her character, and so much dazzled by her admiration of the extraordinary sacrifice she had made, that, in a fit of sudden enthusiasm, she altered her will, to leave to her, and to her sole disposal, the fortune which, almost from his infancy, she had destined for her nephew. Cecilia, astonished and penetrated, opposed the alteration; but even her sister, now Lady Delvile, to whom she daily became dearer, earnestly supported it; while Mortimer, delighted to restore to her through his own family, any part of that power and independence of which her generous and pure regard for himself had deprived her, was absolute in refusing that the deed should be revoked.

Cecilia, from this flattering transaction, received a further conviction of the malignant falsehood of Mr Monckton, who had always represented to her the whole of the Delvile family as equally poor in their circumstances, and illiberal in their minds. The strong spirit of active benevolence which had ever marked her character, was now again displayed, though no longer,

as hitherto, unbounded. She had learnt the error of profusion, even in charity and beneficence; and she had a motive for œconomy, in her animated affection for Mortimer.

She soon sent for Albany, whose surprise that she still existed, and whose rapture at her recovered prosperity, now threatened his senses from the tumult of his joy, with nearly the same danger they had lately been menaced by terror. But though her donations were circumscribed by prudence, and their objects were selected with discrimination, she gave to herself all her former benevolent pleasure, in solacing his afflictions, while she softened his asperity, by restoring to him his favourite office of being her almoner and monitor.

She next sent to her own pensioners, relieved those distresses which her sudden absence had occasioned, and renewed and continued the salaries she had allowed them. All who had nourished reasonable expectations from her bounty she remembered, though she raised no new claimants but with œconomy and circumspection. But neither Albany nor the old pensioners felt the satisfaction of Mortimer, who saw with new wonder the virtues of her mind, and whose admiration of her excellencies, made his gratitude perpetual for the happiness of his lot.

The tender-hearted Henrietta, in returning to her new friends, gave way, with artless openness, to the violence of untamed grief; but finding Mr Arnott as wretched as herself, the sympathy Cecilia had foreseen soon endeared them to each other, while the little interest taken in either by Mrs Harrel, made them almost inseparable companions.

Mrs Harrel, wearied by their melancholy, and sick of retirement, took the earliest opportunity that was offered her of changing her situation; she married very soon a man of fortune in the neighbourhood, and,

quickly forgetting all the past, thoughtlessly began the world again, with new hopes, new connections,—new equipages and new engagements!

Henrietta was then obliged to go again to her mother, where, though deprived of all the indulgencies to which she was now become familiar, she was not more hurt by the separation than Mr Arnott. So sad and so solitary his house seemed in her absence, that he soon followed her to town, and returned not till he carried her back its mistress. And there the gentle gratitude of her soft and feeling heart, engaged from the worthy Mr Arnott the tenderest affection, and, in time, healed the wound of his early and hopeless passion.

The injudicious, the volatile, yet noble-minded Belfield, to whose mutable and enterprising disposition life seemed always rather beginning than progressive, roved from employment to employment, and from public life to retirement, soured with the world, and discontented with himself, till vanquished, at length, by the constant friendship of Delvile, he consented to accept his good offices in again entering the army; and, being fortunately ordered out upon foreign service, his hopes were revived by ambition, and his prospects were brightened by a view of future honour.

The wretched Monckton, dupe of his own cunning and artifices, still lived in lingering misery, doubtful which was most acute, the pain of his wound and confinement, or of his defeat and disappointment. Led on by a vain belief that he had parts to conquer all difficulties, he had indulged without restraint a passion in which interest was seconded by inclination. Allured by such fascinating powers, he shortly suffered nothing to stop his course; and though when he began his career he would have started at the mention of actual dishonour, long before it was concluded, neither treachery nor perjury were regarded by him as stumbling blocks.

All fear of failing was lost in vanity, all sense of probity was sunk in interest, all scruples of conscience were left behind by the heat of the chace. Yet the unforeseen and melancholy catastrophe of his long arts, illustrated in his despite what his principles had obscured, that even in worldly pursuits where fraud out-runs integrity, failure joins dishonour to loss, and disappointment excites triumph instead of pity.

The upright mind of Cecilia, her purity, her virtue, and the moderation of her wishes, gave to her in the warm affection of Lady Delvile, and the unremitting fondness of Mortimer, all the happiness human life seems capable of receiving:—yet human it was, and as such imperfect! she knew that, at times, the whole family must murmur at her loss of fortune, and at times she murmured herself to be thus portionless, tho' an HEIRESS. Rationally, however, she surveyed the world at large, and finding that of the few who had any happiness, there were none without some misery, she checked the rising sigh of repining mortality, and, grateful with general felicity, bore partial evil with cheerfullest resignation.

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